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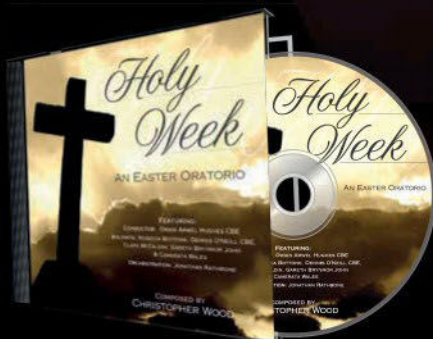
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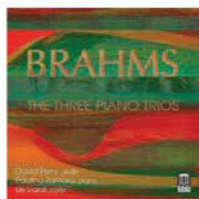
A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Brahms

The Three Piano Trios

David Perry *vn* Uri Vardi *vc* Paulina Zamora *pf*

Delos © ② DE3489 (83' • DDD)



Jenny Kallick's booklet-notes for this recording of the three Brahms trios for piano, violin and cello are as elegant and insightful as the performances themselves. The notes point out how much can be gained by knowing the contexts in which these pieces came to life – and, in the case of the Op 8 Trio, how Brahms improved upon what he first set down.

The two discs are divided to reflect the chronology of Brahms's final thoughts on the trios. The Second and Third take up the first disc; the revised Op 8 follows by itself. What results is a seamless expedition through the stages of the composer's distinctive weaving of ideas and instruments, especially as played with heightened sensitivity by pianist Paulina Zamora, violinist David Perry and cellist Uri Vardi.

To say that musicians let music speak for itself is always a dicey proposition; it could mean they are simply presenting the score without much (or any) interpretative motivation. Zamora, Perry and Vardi take Brahms at his word even as they lift phrases to subtle and urgent effect. There is no temptation to overdramatise the impassioned moments or wallow in Brahms's tender lyricism. Each of the trios unfolds as if these artists are engaging in a series of natural and compelling conversations.

Balances are superb, not always a given when it comes to the cello in the genre of the trio, and the musicians apply tonal beauty to everything they touch. In all, a wonderful release. **Donald Rosenberg**

R Sierra

Sinfonía No 3, 'La salsa'. Borikén.

El baile. Beyond the Silence of Sorrow[®]

Martha Guth *sop* Puerto Rico Symphony

Orchestra / Maximiano Valdés

Naxos American Classics © 8 559817 (75' • DDD)

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Blaise Déjardin

The Boston Cello Quartet player on the group's 'Latin Project' and life away from the orchestra



After your previous disc, 'Pictures', what made you embark on the 'Latin Project'?

Our fans were asking us for a second album, so we knew there was a demand. An audience favourite from 'Pictures' is our version of *La muerte del Ángel* by Piazzolla; we took another tune by Piazzolla, *Adiós Nonino*, as a point of departure to explore the Latin music.

How did you choose the repertoire?

We had already played many of the pieces so it made sense to find or arrange more to complete a programme. We were also thrilled to commission a new piece, *Bossa do Fim*, from Cambridge-based Venezuelan composer and cellist Paul Desenne.

What are the challenges of arranging existing works for cello quartet?

The cello is a very versatile instrument and I think the only danger is to write all the cello parts in the same medium register. To breathe well, music needs different registers and different textures, so I write for us mostly as if we were a regular string quartet.

What's fun about being in the quartet?

Simply playing together is a great joy for all of us. It allows us an unusual chamber-music life next to our roles as section players in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. We also get to live many experiences together: we've played with the pop band Train, were invited by Yo-Yo Ma to join him for a special cello octet concert at Tanglewood last summer, and played the National Anthem at Fenway Park, our iconic baseball stadium in Boston... the list gets longer every year!

What's next?

One concept we are toying with for the future is a jazz programme with vibraphone, bass and drums around the music of Thelonious Monk. Whatever our next album is, it should surprise you!



Commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in 2005, Roberto Sierra's big-boned, entertaining Sinfonía No 3, *La salsa*, infused with Spanish Caribbean colours and rhythms, moves forward in addictive Technicolor surges.

'Danzas' is the most purely hedonistic of the four movements, a wild, exuberant outpouring of joy quoting Puerto Rico's

iconic 19th-century danza composer Juan Morel Campos.

Two shorter orchestral works are even more potent. The 15-minute *Borikén*, the original name of Sierra's homeland, is a chaconne cocktail that shakes up Spanish and native musical vernaculars with a brilliant Puerto Rican twist. The shorter *El baile* ('The Dance') is as impressively powerful as its conceptual basis, a theme and variations based on B-A-C-H with urgent suggestions of African Caribbean music from 17th-century plantations thrown in.

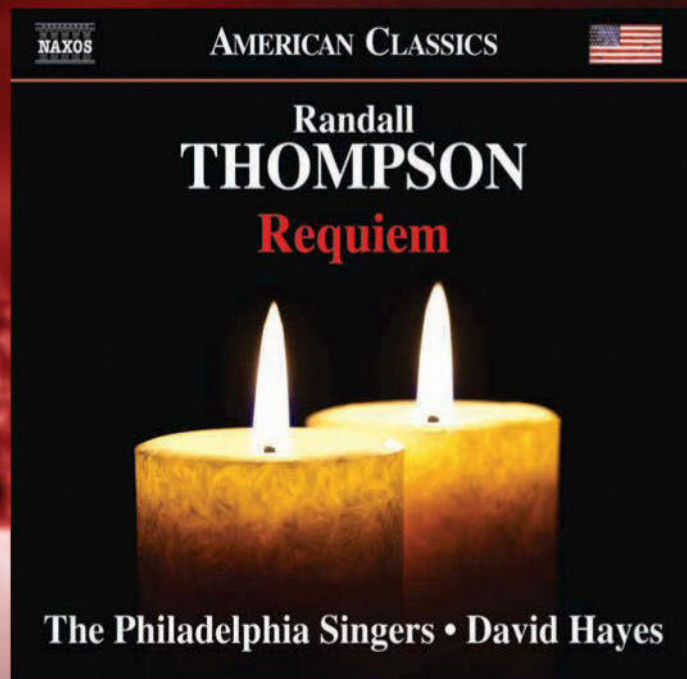
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- DAVID HAYES

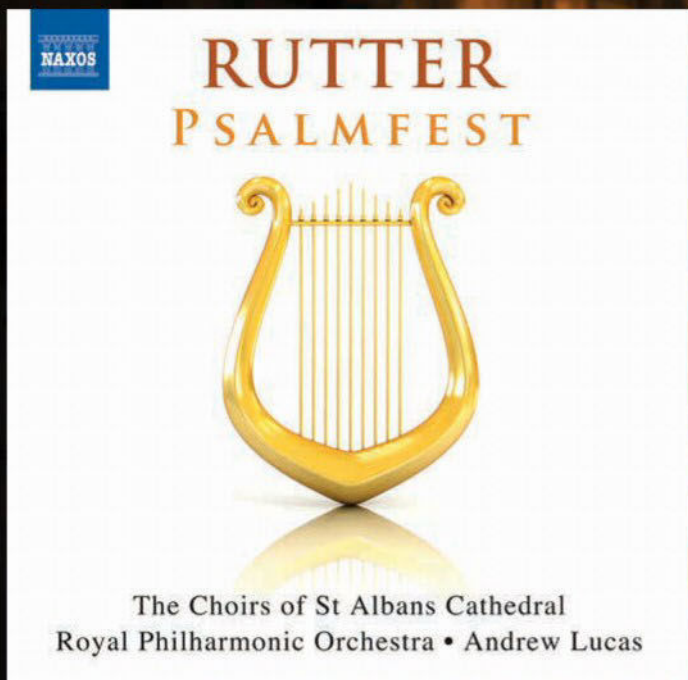


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Going Latin: the Boston Cello quartet feature music from South America and Spain on their new disc

More affecting notes are sounded by *Beyond the Silence of Sorrow*, a song-cycle to poems by N Scott Momaday, whose *House Made of Dawn* won a Pulitzer in 1969. Sung with touching restraint by the dark-voiced Canadian soprano Martha Guth, Sierra's music is intended to connect with his heritage, 'about the many cultures and peoples that are with us, and that preceded us; some forgotten and some in a fragile state of existence'. The performances by the Puerto Rico Symphony conducted by Music Director Maximiano Valdés meet the music head-on in audiophile sound. Ladzio Maria's densely packed booklet-notes deliver great contextual background.

Laurence Vittes

'The French Influence'

Bozza Caprice **Charlier** Solo de concours

Enescu Légende **Honegger** Intrada

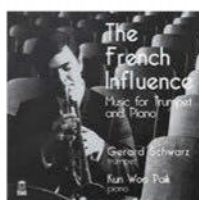
Ibert Impromptu **Jolivet** Air de bravoure

Pascal Capriccio **Senée** Concertino

Gerard Schwarz tpt **Kun Woo Paik** pf

Delos © DE1047 (42' • ADD)

Recorded 1971



Devotees of orchestral music may know Gerard Schwarz from his activities as a

conductor, especially his years as Music Director of the Seattle Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. But before he took up the baton, he was a superlative trumpeter who served for five years as co-principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic. Recorded in 1971, a year before he joined that orchestra, this disc of short French pieces shows Schwarz to have been a player of remarkable virtuosity and expressive élan.

Several of the works on the programme were written for competitions, and you can hear what judges would listen for: agility, clarity, poetry. Those qualities abound in George Enescu's *Légende*, which balances moody lyricism with dramatic flourishes and muted passages. The title of Théo Charlier's *Solo de concours* announces its provenance in the competition world, unfolding like a mini-concerto, with fast-slow-fast sections that test a soloist's varied gifts.

The heraldic character of the trumpet is put to brilliant use in such pieces as Arthur Honegger's *Intrada* and André Jolivet's *Air de bravoure*, while Henri Senée's three-movement *Concertino* is a charmer, especially in a finale of lilting grace. More than a little whimsy is packed into Eugène Bozza's *Caprice* and Claude Pascal's *Capriccio*, as their titles imply.

Schwarz makes the most of these Gallic morsels, playing with refined and limber

stylishness. He is fortunate to be paired with a pianist of equally tasteful artistry, Kun Woo Paik, a high-school chum who also went on to a noteworthy career.

Donald Rosenberg

'The Latin Project'

Albéniz Asturias. Rapsodia cubana **Barroso**

Brazil **Chabrier** España **Corea/Rodrigo** Spain

Desenne Bossa do Fim **Giménez** La boda de Luís

Alonso **Granados** Andaluza **Piazzolla** Adiós

Nonino **Sciortino** Iber-amer

Boston Cello Quartet with **Will Hudgins** perc

Boston Cello Quartet © (58' • DDD)

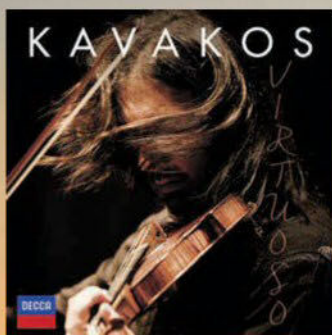


Playing in a major symphony orchestra has its professional rewards, but many

musicians who do so need other outlets for their art. The members of the Boston Cello Quartet perform original works and arrangements when they aren't immersed in Beethoven symphonies and such with the Boston Symphony. Their captivating first disc, 'Pictures', featured everything from Mussorgsky and Rossini to Debussy and Piazzolla.

The ensemble's new recording, 'The Latin Project', takes Piazzolla as the starting point for a journey through an assortment of

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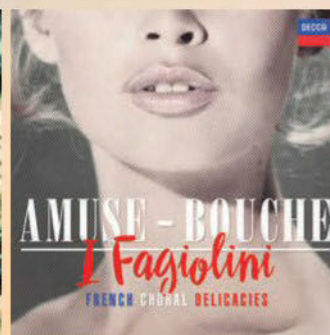


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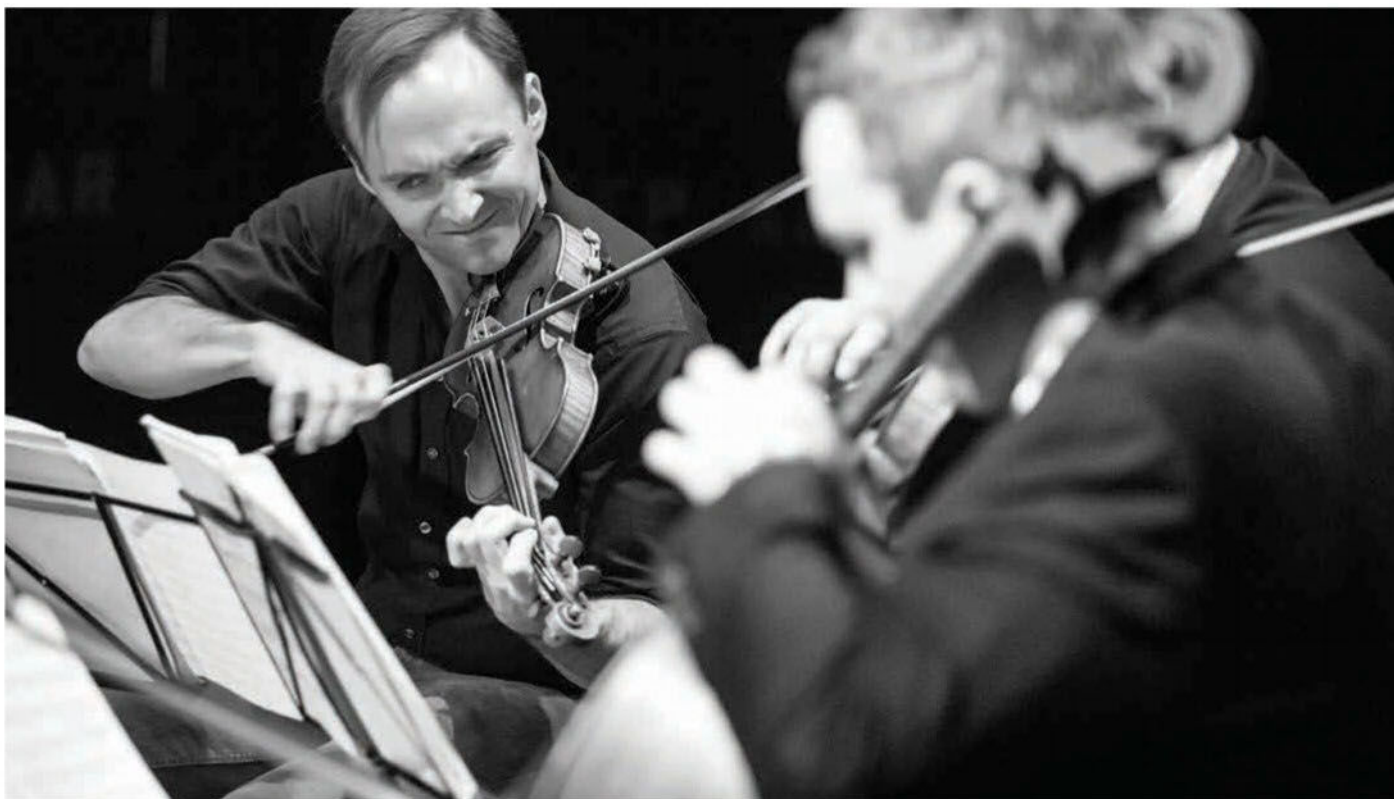


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Serious business from the Spektral Quartet on their new album on Sono Luminus

sensuous and haunting dance music. You might be tempted to find a willing partner and trip the light fantastic while listening to this entrancing disc, which contains inventive transcriptions – by BCQ members Blaise Déjardin and Alexandre Lecarme and others – that often give the impression that a large string ensemble is in zestful action.

This is possible due to the large range of the cello and its ability to conjure an array of colours. Déjardin's arrangement of Chabrier's *España* is among the most effective in this respect: it is so alluring in atmosphere and sweep that it somehow doesn't make one pine for the famous orchestral version.

The same can be said for the transcriptions of music by Albéniz, Corea, Granados and Barroso. In those pieces and original works by Paul Desenne, Patrice Sciortino and Gerónimo Giménez, the quartet play with a blend of suavity, succulent vibrato and simmering passion that serves the music beautifully. Along the way, they receive elegant help from a Boston Symphony colleague, percussionist Will Hudgins. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Sacred Reflections of Canada'

'A Canadian Mass'

Cabena Be still and know that I am God **Telfer** Silence **Nickel** Kyrie eleison **Bevan** Hide thy face

Walker I asked of God **Stokes** Gloria! **J Enns** O magnum mysterium. Da pacem **Macdonald** Tabula rasa **L Enns** Credo **Ingari** Ave Maria **Fogarty** Ave Maria **Emery** Sanctus **Togni** Psalme 98 **Kalnins** Our Father in heaven **S Martin** O sacrum convivium **R Lang** Agneau de Dieu **Robinovitch** The Lord is my shepherd **Allan** In paradisum

Canadian Chamber Choir / Julia Davids
Canadian Chamber Choir © CCCCD002
(69' • DDD • T/t)



Two elements bind the works on the Canadian Chamber Choir's new disc: all are by living Canadian composers, and they comprise what the recording's title calls 'A Canadian Mass'. In other words, the sections of the Ordinary of the Mass alternate with pieces set to a range of religious texts and poetry. While music by 18 composers could rub uncomfortable shoulders with one another, the differences in style – sometimes subtle, often striking – enhance the overall impact of these superbly crafted and affecting miniatures.

Two fervent settings of *Ave Maria* couldn't be more different. Robert Ingari's take on the prayer abounds in rich, consoling lines. In James Fogarty's version,

the text is tweaked and the slowly unfolding harmonies are pungent, heightening the struggle the prayer expresses.

The repertoire includes music by a pair of composers with the same surname, though they are unrelated. Jeff Enns, the choir's composer-in-residence, captures the reverent and urgent atmospheres in *O magnum mysterium* and *Da pacem* to vibrant effect. In the mesmerising *Credo* from his *Missa brevis*, Leonard Enns treats the text with chant-like drama.

Amid these pieces, the disc offers a panoply of other fine works by too many composers to name in laundry-list fashion. Suffice to say that Canada appears to be bursting with fresh compositional voices.

And speaking of voices, the Canadian Chamber Choir, led by Julia Davids, deserves accolades for singing that is at once glowing, expertly balanced and alive to rhythmic and harmonic nuances.

Donald Rosenberg

'Serious Business'

Fisher-Lochhead Hack Haydn String Quartet, 'Joke', Op 33 No 2 **Macklay** Many Many Cadences **Reminick** The Ancestral Mousetrap **Spektral Quartet**

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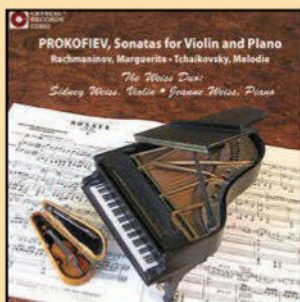
Cynthia DeAlmeida, "principal oboe of the Pittsburgh Symphony, is a poetic artist who teams beautifully with superb orchestra colleagues, [including] Noah Bendix-Balgley, now concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic... The old and new composers they perform so expressively" (Gramophone) include Reinecki, Arnold, Wunderer, and Moricz. "One of the best oboe players in the world" (Amer. Recd. Guide) CD825.



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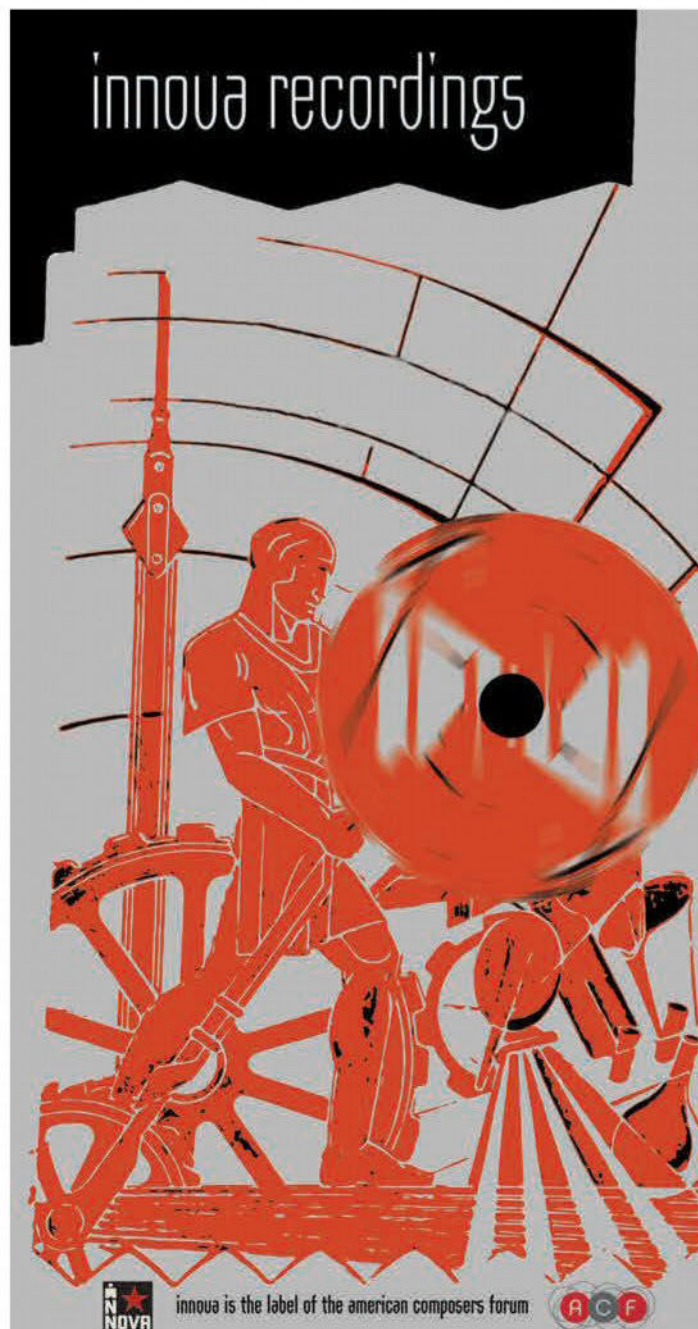
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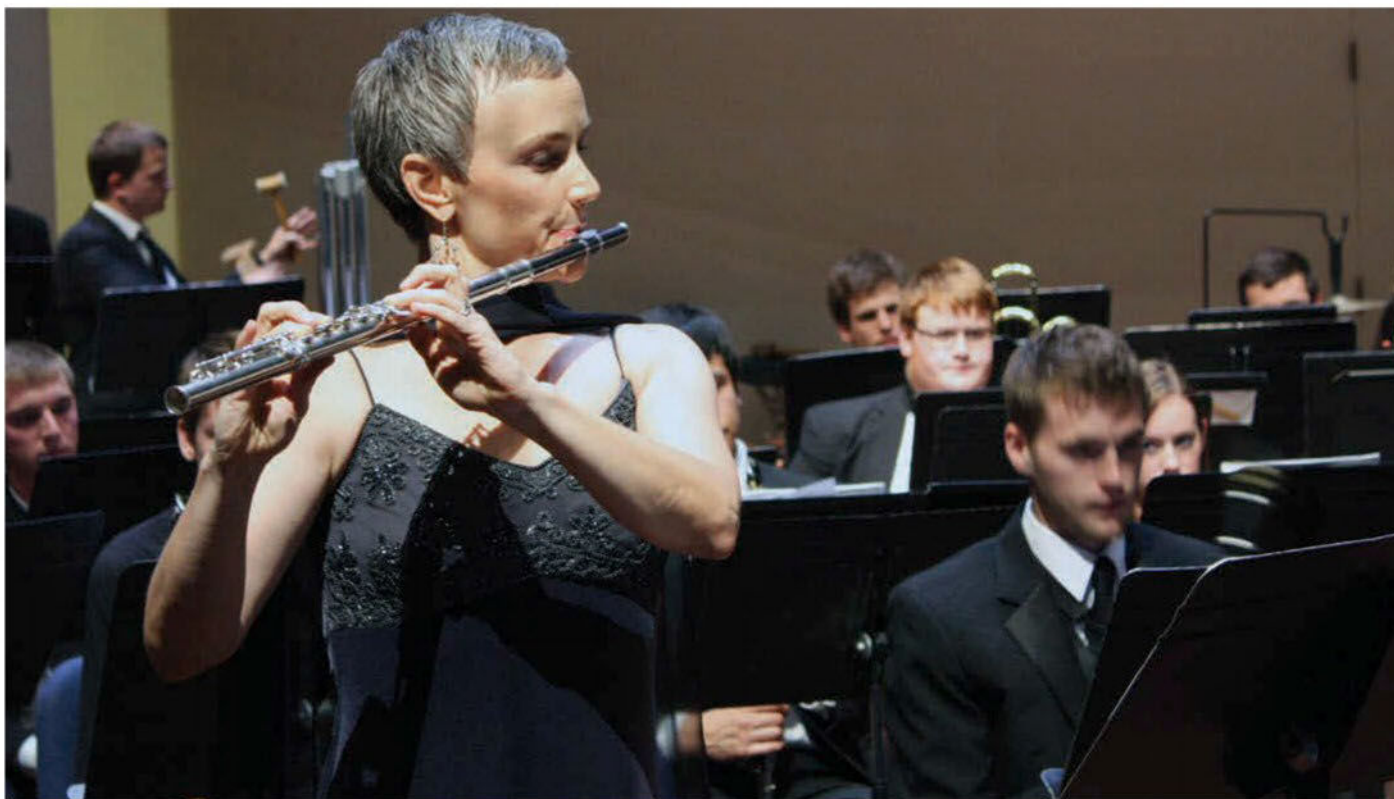
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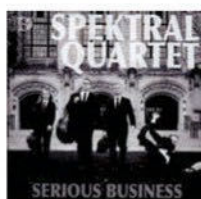


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Exploring 'the internal aspects of shade and light': flautist Lisa Garner Santa has released a mixed recital on MSR Classics



'This album is not funny,' writes Spektral Quartet viola player Doyle Armbrust in his

booklet-note about the quartet's very not-funny new release of music by Sky Macklay, David Reminick and Chris Fisher-Lochhead, with Haydn plopped down surreally in their midst. The resulting geeky, highly interactive, creative and collaborative fun and games drenched in pop culture are, as advertised, unlike anything its intended audience – or anyone else – has ever heard.

Macklay's *Many Many Cadences* is a dizzying layering-on of what the composer calls 'pinging rapid-fire, tonal cadences all the way down in rhythmic unison, only to scramble back up for another adrenaline fix'. Reminick's *The Ancestral Mousetrap*, as befits the lead singer of the punk outfit Paper Mice, requires the quartet to sing macabre, absurdist poetry by Russell Edson while scrambling to play complex musical bits and pieces.

After an incongruously conventional reading of Haydn's Quartet Op 33 No 2, notable only for oddly affecting, glassy slides in the Trio, the disc's real serious business turns out to be the concluding 22 tracks and 25 minutes of *Hack*, in which

Fisher-Lochhead and the quartet, ensemble-in-residence at the University of Chicago, create 'a nuanced, impeccable graph of the cadence and delivery' of 16 comedians ranging from Lenny Bruce to Tig Notaro. Based on transcriptions of the comedians' work, the allusions and deciphering them could provide an evening's entertainment for the right cool crowd. For the Spektral Quartet it's appropriately ironic, of course, that comedians steal the show on an album that ain't funny. **Laurence Vittes**

'Shades of Sound'

Bowen Flute Sonata, Op 120 Heggie Soliloquy
Martinů Flute Sonata No 1 Rabboni Sonatas –
No 13; No 14; No 16 M Santa Flute Sonata
Schwantner Black Anemones
Lisa Garner Santa // Nataliya Sukhina pf
 MSR Classics © MS1552 (73' • DDD)



Featuring fine playing and an intriguing programme, Lisa

Garner Santa's recital was selected to explore 'the internal aspects of shade and light'. In doing so, it coalesces into one soothing, pleasant wash of sound dominated by Jake Heggie's exquisite *Soliloquy*, commissioned by Camerata

Pacifica, one of Southern California's leading chamber music series, as a memorial to a longtime supporter. Transformative at its root, *Soliloquy* is a setting of the song 'Beyond' from the composer's *Pieces of 9/11: Memories from Houston*, and Santa's playing of the heartbreaking melody connects with the music's profound message of peace through consolation.

The disc opens with the tangible dreams and mortal fears of Joseph Schwanter's *Black Anemones*, then proceeds to three helplessly happy, innocuous and rarely recorded sonatas by Giuseppe Rabboni, principal flute at La Scala during the second quarter of the 19th century (Sonata No 13 is 'based' on a Donizetti oboe sonata). York Bowen's Sonata, written in 1946 for the Philharmonia Orchestra's principal Gareth Morris, remains as appealingly conservative as it was originally: fluent in its technique, attractive in the sounds it gives the flute to make, English in its form, and Impressionist French and Russian at its heart. The sonatas by Martinů and Matthew Santa provide additional moments of beauty.

Recorded in Hemmle Recital Hall at Texas Tech University where Santa teaches – including, as a core curriculum course, 'Yoga and the Creative Arts' – the sound of both Santa's flute and Nataliya Sukhin's graceful piano-playing is, like the performances, lovely and mild. **Laurence Vittes**

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Exploring the living legacy of recording history

This column often discusses the way technology has revolutionised both how music is recorded and how we listen to and buy it. The past decade has been one of profound change, such that it's too early to understand fully its impact. But, then, perhaps it was ever thus? This month I was privileged to spend an afternoon at the EMI archive in Hayes, Middlesex. The original site of 150 acres, of which today's archive occupies but a small corner, once welcomed 20,000 workers daily, employed in the many facets of the company's business, from building wooden gramophone cabinets to pressing records. The archive stores a vast amount of irreplaceable recording media from classical to pop – masters, artwork, vinyls, 78s – in secure and climate-controlled conditions. Among them, we're proud to say, is *Gramophone's* old library of LPs and 78s, now named the Pollard Collection after the family so intrinsic to our own history as owners and editors across several generations.

Nestling inside all this is the EMI Group Archive Trust, an extensive collection of items that tell the tale of The Gramophone Company (EMI's forerunner) from its foundation in 1897. Objects as diverse as the first recording made by British royalty (George V's Empire message), gramophone cabinets charting changing trends in furniture design, the gramophone taken on Scott's ill-fated expedition to the Antarctic, Alan Blumlein's stereo innovations and even several versions by Francis Barraud of his iconic painting of Nipper and the gramophone, 'His Master's Voice'. While it's not open to the public, the collection



Martin

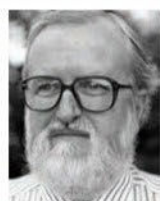
is available for research purposes and for loan to museums and exhibitions, and the Trust is keen for the wider world to know about this significant resource: you can find out more at emiarchivetrust.org.

Perhaps what the collection best embodies is the crucial contribution, the genius and the commitment, of all those on the other side of the microphone and far beyond it – the entrepreneurs and engineers, the acousticians and the accountants. Without them, we wouldn't have the musical legacies that we celebrate month after month – something artists can themselves be the first to recognise. When I interviewed guitarist John Williams for this issue, his praise for his long-standing producer Paul Myers, who died last year, couldn't have been more fulsome – a partnership which runs throughout the wonderful 59-disc set compiled by Sony Classical to celebrate the 75th birthday of this impressive musician. Even more monumental in ambition is the Yehudi Menuhin box released this month by Warner Classics to mark what would have been the great violinist's centenary, and one which draws extensively on recordings, information and artefacts from the EMI archive at Hayes.

Talk of lifelong legacies brings us sadly on to Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who died on March 5 as we were preparing this issue for the printers. A pioneer of period-performance practice, something which also naturally informed his work with modern-instrument orchestras, he was a hugely influential and inspiring figure for both musicians and audiences. We will pay tribute next month.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'The more complex an artist is, the harder he is to assess,' says **TULLY POTTER**, the author of our cover story.

'Every time I write about Yehudi Menuhin, I find it a challenge, but it involves much pleasure in revisiting my memories and measuring them against his recorded performances. I always find that the more I know about him, the greater he seems.'



'It's hard to believe that a full 10 years have gone by since I first talked to pianist Yevgeny Sudbin

about his recording project,' says **GEOFFREY NORRIS**, who spoke to Sudbin again for this month's feature. 'How astute BIS was to sign him up! Their partnership has yielded a decade of distinguished, delectable discs.'



'My first *Otello* was a wonderful Chelsea Opera Group concert conducted by the underrated Mario Bernardi,'

reminisces **RICHARD LAWRENCE**, author of this issue's Collection. 'Exploring the performances on disc has been a moving experience: memories of McCracken and Gobbi, and admiration for the range of so many other great interpretations.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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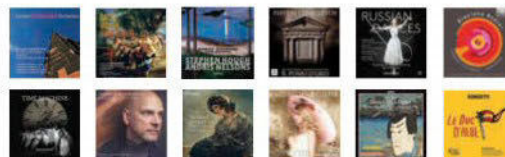
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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullifford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



D SCARLATTI
18 Keyboard Sonatas
Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*
BIS
► **HARRIET SMITH'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 48**

More than a decade on from his impressive debut on the BIS label – and indeed in our pages – with music by Scarlatti, Yevgeny Sudbin returns to the composer with a truly triumphant recital.



LUTOSŁAWSKI. SZYMANOWSKI
Orchestral Works
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Alexander Liebreich
Accentus

The orchestra is just one of the stars on this first-rate recording – the other is Katowice's new and fine-sounding hall.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



WEBER
Complete Overtures
WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Howard Griffiths
CPO

Howard Griffiths and his players bring a thrilling sense of character, clarity and colour to these Weber overtures – a hugely enjoyable listen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



BEETHOVEN/LISZT
Symphony No 9
Yury Martynov *pf*
Alpha
Rather than sounding like a mere reduction,

when played as superbly as here this transcription has a drama and poignancy all of its own, conveyed on a beautiful-sounding period piano.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



BOULEZ Complete Music for Solo Piano
Marc Ponthus *pf*
Bridge
A timely and appropriate tribute

to Pierre Boulez, who died in January. This is an expertly played survey of the composer's complete music for solo piano – a fascinating listen.

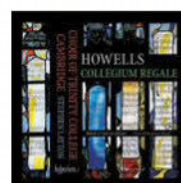
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



HANDEL/MENDELSSOHN
Israel in Ägypten
The King's Consort / Robert King
Vivat

This reconstruction of Mendelssohn's reconstruction is of great interest from a historical perspective, but also richly rewarding from a musical one.

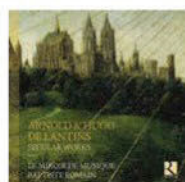
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**



HOWELLS
Collegium Regale Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge / **Stephen Layton**
Hyperion

Stephen Layton's skilled shaping of this glorious music is matched by excellent singing from his choir – a wonderful follow-up to their 2012 Award-winner.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**



LANTINS Secular Works
Le Miroir de Musique / Baptiste Romain
Ricercar
Fifteenth-century repertoire from little-

known figures – possibly brothers – but well worth the committed advocacy given here. These are richly rewarding vocal and instrumental performances.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**



'AMUSE-BOUCHE'
I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth
Decca
There's some very skilful singing here

in an imaginative and entertaining programme of 20th-century French repertoire, marking this fine group's 30th anniversary in style.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 106**



HONEGGER/IBERT
L'Aiglon
Sols; Montreal Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano
Decca

This little-known operetta is given a delightful performance by a French-speaking cast in what marks a new era in the Montreal SO's relationship with Decca.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 115**



DVD/BLU-RAY
'MUSIC - A JOURNEY FOR LIFE'
Riccardo Chailly
Accentus

A valuable insight into Riccardo Chailly's approach to music-making, and into his highly successful directorship of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which draws to a close at the end of the current season.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
'THE MENUHIN CENTURY'
'The Historic Recordings'
Warner Classics

If you can't run to the whole Menuhin set, this constituent box offers many of his significant recordings.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 108**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Handel's long-lost cantata dates from 1706 and was discovered in Ton Koopman's private collection

Newly discovered Handel cantata to receive its modern premiere

A newly discovered Handel cantata – an early version of *Tu fedel? Tu costante?*, HWV171 – will be given its modern premiere at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam on April 9 by the Amsterdam Baroque Choir and Orchestra conducted by Ton Koopman. The cantata was discovered in Koopman's private collection by the musicologist John Roberts of the University of California, Berkeley.

The cantata includes four arias, only the first of which is similar to that in the later version of the work, with the remaining three being entirely new. It also differs from the later version in that

it calls for an oboe in addition to two violins and basso continuo. It is thought that the cantata – which will be known as HWV171a – is one of the earliest works that Handel composed in Italy, probably in Venice or Florence, in 1706.

Koopman's website explains that 'there can be no doubt about Handel's authorship, because of numerous motivic connections with his other works, including the opera *Almira*, performed in Hamburg in 1705, before the composer left for Italy. The same copyist was also responsible for the copies of two other Handel cantatas, now in the British Library, that once belonged to Handel.'

Marković named Music Director of Opera North

Aleksandar Marković has been announced as the next Music Director of Opera North. He succeeds Richard Farnes, who has held the post for 12 years and will conclude his tenure with six complete cycles of Wagner's *Ring* this summer.

Marković will take up his new role in September with a revival of David McVicar's production of Strauss's

Der Rosenkavalier. He made his main-stage debut with the company in 2015 conducting Janáček's *Jenůfa* and has also appeared in concert with the Orchestra of Opera North in programmes of Wagner and Strauss. Marković's previous appointments include Music Director of the Brno PO (2009-15) and Chief Conductor of the Tiroler Landestheater in Innsbruck (2005-8).

PRS for Music Foundation launches new Composers' Fund

The PRS for Music Foundation have announced a new fund worth £150,000 annually to enable UK composers to realise projects that may not otherwise be possible via traditional commissioning routes.

Executive Director Vanessa Reed, explained the purpose of the fund: 'The conversations we've been having with composers over the past two years revealed the need for composers to have more autonomy, better fees and improved conditions to advance their creative practice. Our new Composers Fund is one response to this, providing some of the UK's most distinctive composers with financial support for anything that might enable them to make the next step in their career. We're delighted to be running this fund with additional support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and I look forward to seeing how composers respond to this new opportunity when they apply to our first deadline on April 12, 2016.' For more information about the fund, and to apply, visit prsformusicfoundation.com

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies awarded RPS Gold Medal

'That's the one I wanted!' exclaimed Peter Maxwell Davies as he received the news that he had been awarded the highest honour that the Royal Philharmonic Society can bestow – its Gold Medal.

In awarding the medal, the RPS said: 'It is the brilliance of his writing, the searing power of his imagination, the vivid theatricality and the quality of craftsmanship that engage us with the music of Peter Maxwell Davies.'

The illustrious roster of composers who have received the medal in



Gold medallist: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

previous years includes Brahms, Elgar, Messiaen, Britten, Tippett and Boulez.

Ennio Morricone wins Academy Award at the age of 87

With more than 500 film and TV credits to his name, the Italian composer Ennio Morricone finally won his first competitive Academy Award at the age of 87 (he was awarded an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement in 2007). His winning score for Quentin Tarrantino's *The Hateful Eight* triumphed in a category that included fellow octogenarian John Williams's score for *Star Wars: Episode VII*.

Morricone has been nominated on five previous occasions, for *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Mission* (1986), *The Untouchables* (1987), *Bugsy* (1991) and *Malèna* (2000). But he first found international fame scoring Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966).

The creative process behind the score for *The Hateful Eight* was unusual in that Morricone produced the music based on Tarantino's screenplay rather than scoring the film scenes themselves.

Borletti-Buitoni Trust announces 2016 award winners

The Borletti-Buitoni Trust has announced the soloists and ensembles who will receive awards and fellowships this year, as well as a special chamber-music prize for Italian musicians in honour of Claudio Abbado.

The Danish String Quartet and soprano Anna Lucia Richter receive BBT Awards worth £30,000. Richter appeared on Marin Alsop's recording of Brahms's *German Requiem* with the MDR Leipzig Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra (Naxos, 9/13), with Richard Lawrence noting in his review that 'Anna Lucia Richter shows great promise in her solo.' And Richter's recording of songs by Schumann, Brahms and Britten is reviewed in this issue.

BBT Fellowships (worth £20,000) have been awarded to the Calidore String Quartet, violinists Alexandra Conunova and Maria Milstein, pianists Zoltán Fejérvári and Beatrice Rana, and viola-player Eivind Holtmark Ringstad. Of these recipients, perhaps it is Beatrice Rana's name which will be most familiar to *Gramophone's* readers as her recording of Prokofiev's Second and Tchaikovsky's First piano concertos was an Editor's Choice in December 2015. Patrick Rucker's encouraging response to the Prokofiev was that 'Rana's lithe and nimble interpretation restores the humanity to this often brutalised score'.

The winners of the BBT Special Chamber Music Prize (worth £25,000) are Quartetto Lyskamm. The quartet was founded in 2008 and is comprised of graduates of the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan.



Calidore String Quartet: recipients of a 2016 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship worth £20,000

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PODCAST

Gramophone's Editor-in-Chief James Jolly meets Lang Lang (pictured) to talk about the pianist's passion for music education, his ongoing series of informative books for student pianists - *Mastering the Piano* - and, in what will be his 21st appearance at London's Royal Albert Hall, a concert aimed at young pianists called 'Exploring the Piano with Lang Lang and Friends'.



GRAMOPHONE'S TOP 10s

With so many recordings produced every month it can sometimes be difficult to know what to listen to next. So we have produced dozens of Top 10 lists online, which are an excellent way to begin exploring a new area of classical music. All of the recordings included in our Top 10 lists are highly recommended, the majority have either won *Gramophone* Awards or Editor's Choice accolades. One of the most recent additions is our 'Top 10 Wagner recordings' list, which includes classic accounts by Solti, Kubelík, Klemperer and Karajan.

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A black and white photograph of Yehudi Menuhin, a renowned violinist. He is shown from the chest up, holding a violin and bow. He has a slight smile and is looking directly at the camera. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and the instrument. The background is dark and out of focus.

Never just a **VIOLINIST**

Despite the technical difficulties he later encountered, the musicality Yehudi Menuhin showed as a child never waned – yet he was as much a humanist and statesman as he was a violinist. In this centenary year, Tully Potter celebrates his recorded legacy

For some 60 years, if you buttonholed anyone in the street in the civilised world and asked them to name a violinist, the odds were that they would say 'Yehudi Menuhin'.

Even today, 100 years after his birth and 17 after his death, his name and the many portraits of his noble visage are cultural icons: he stands as the *beau idéal* of the well-rounded musician, with a big heart and a generous nature. How did he establish and maintain this hold on the public imagination?

Records played their part. Menuhin was the first prodigy to gain from the gramophone's coming of age, with the introduction of the microphone in 1925. Thus millions who never attended his concerts could hear his unique tone, clear as a bell, on records and the radio. Discs of short pieces, made in 1928-30, included one gem, Sam Franko's arrangement of 'The Song of the Bride' from Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*: here his 'speaking' sound could be heard in embryo. His father Moshe, one of the more repellent prodigy parents, had a genius for publicity and, once it was clear that even in the Depression any Menuhin disc would sell, all suggestions were eagerly snapped up by the A&R men. Loyalty came into it, too – Menuhin was essentially with the same record company for seven decades, as Victor in America and HMV in Europe were close until 1955, and even his 1951 Japanese discs were made by the Tokyo affiliate.

But somehow Menuhin was never just a violinist. Over-controlling and exploitative as his parents were, they gave him a happy home life; and one of his father's better characteristics was an interest in philosophy and ethics. Perhaps crucially, all three of Menuhin's major teachers had strong humanistic streaks in their personalities, which rubbed off on the lad. Born in New York on April 22, 1916, to Russian immigrants, Menuhin was proud of his Hasidic Jewish heritage, in which music was a vital ingredient. He was actually trained on the West Coast, where his parents moved in 1918: having shown early signs of intense musicality, in 1921 he began violin lessons. From 1923, two years after he first began to appear in concert, his teacher was the concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony, Louis Persinger, a pupil of Ysaÿe who oversaw his development into the most celebrated prodigy in history. But in 1925 Menuhin encountered the playing of the charismatic Romanian violinist-composer George Enescu, whose personality captivated him, and from 1927 Enescu became his chief mentor: the family moved to Paris so that Menuhin could study there. In 1929 Enescu selflessly sent the boy to Basel to work with another great violinist-composer,



*After the war he visited the
Nazi death camps, played
for displaced persons...
the chubby prodigy
had been left behind*



Top: the young Yehudi Menuhin with his Stradivarius;
above: pupil and mentor – Menuhin with George
Enescu, who began teaching the prodigy in 1927

the German soloist and quartet leader Adolf Busch. After two summers Busch – who found the manipulative Moshe hard to take – gracefully withdrew, later saying: 'He had a natural talent for playing in his own way and all I was doing was destroying that, so I was doing him harm; and I could see I was never going to get him to play in my way.' (Moshe made out, and even persuaded Menuhin, that the parting was the family's idea.) Busch noted the boy's facility in imitating, which worked against originality. Even so, he inculcated a love of chamber music and a more scholarly attitude.

THE CONCERT PLATFORM BECKONS

The 1930s saw a veritable explosion in Menuhin's concert activity and his first great recording, the Bach Double Concerto in 1932 with Pierre Monteux conducting – Busch had refused to fall in with this idea of Moshe's, which HMV's Artistic Director Fred Gaisberg admitted was a publicity stunt, but Enescu proved more amenable and the performance was both artistically and commercially successful. Another coup was the first complete recording of Paganini's D major Concerto in 1934, also with Monteux. Like Busch, Enescu had an astounding memory and the young Menuhin felt challenged to emulate him. The Romanian's varied vibrato and Romantic inclinations, even in Baroque and Classical music, chimed with his own instincts. In 1935 Menuhin toured the world but by 1936 he was having to insist on a sabbatical, the first loosening of his parents' control; he resumed his career in late 1937. Like his sisters Hephzibah and Yaltah, he made a disastrous marriage; but just before it, in February 1938, came his first truly mature recording, the Schumann Concerto with John Barbirolli and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra.

The war brought much stress: concerts for troops, the wounded and civilians; living in army camps; travelling in spartan conditions in USAF and RAF planes; and

the break-up of his marriage. Positives were his best Brahms Concerto recording, with the Enescu cadenza, made for the BBC in 1943 with Sir Adrian Boult; and his encounter later that year with Bartók, leading to the commissioning of the Solo Violin Sonata. After the war he visited the Nazi death camps with Britten, played for displaced persons, toured Russia and courted controversy by championing Furtwängler and playing first in Berlin and then, in 1951, in Japan. By now the chubby prodigy had been left behind, he'd embarked on a happy second marriage and was headed for what would be, from posterity's point of view, his most productive two decades. Still only in his mid-thirties, he was astonishingly good-looking, but the public sensed a remarkable artistic personality beneath the god-like exterior.



From left to right: Menuhin recording for HMV – when the microphone came into use in 1925, he made full use of it; signing 78s; with his sisters Yaltah and Hephzibah

THE LATE-1940S CRISIS

In reappraising Menuhin, we have to confront what – not for me, but for some of my colleagues – is a stumbling block. In the late 1940s, the violinist suffered a crisis. He suddenly felt he did not really know how to play the violin; until then, he had always done it without analysing it. He worked through this phase, developing interesting theories which, sadly, he never fully codified. His espousal of yoga helped. But anyone looking for the immaculate Menuhin of the 1930s will not find him in the 1950s or '60s. As early as 1932, a perceptive critic noted a defect in his bow arm. He never cottoned on to Busch's use of the long bow, and followed Enescu in producing his fine sonority by a method that David Oistrakh penetratingly criticised: 'Enescu the violin player had an important characteristic: an exceptional expressiveness of bow articulation which was very difficult to adapt to. Literally every note, every group of notes, had this verbal, recitative expressiveness (this is also typical of Menuhin, Enescu's disciple). While playing with Enescu, as well as with Menuhin, I always pondered: how to approach this manner? Is it always necessary? I personally hold a great stock in the expressive blend of *legato*.' On the film of Menuhin and Oistrakh playing the Bach Double, it is noticeable how many more bow changes Menuhin uses. Did this trait contribute to the difficulties he and Enescu faced in later life? In the 1960s and '70s, one could sometimes hear Menuhin play embarrassingly badly. I remember a terrible Beethoven Concerto in which, strangely, he pulled himself together for the Kreisler cadenzas; and a Brahms Double with János Starker where he could hardly keep his bow on the string. Yet I heard him perform difficult pieces such as Bartók's Solo Sonata

or Bach's Chaconne superbly. And in Bruno Monsaingeon's films of the 1987 Russian concerts, we see the 71-year-old playing beautifully, albeit with reduced power.

For me, the post-war Menuhin, with all his problems, was 10 times the musician he was in the 1930s. When he was playing a Bach or Mozart concerto with his own chamber orchestra, the music seemed to flow out of every joint or muscle of his body, and he appeared to have more music in his little finger than most rivals had in their entire beings. Each performance had its narrative. Quite short of stature, he could enter a crowded room and draw all eyes to him, or speak with authority on almost any subject without notes. Sometimes one wished he would behave less like a guru or statesman, though. On one occasion, knowing I had just an hour for an interview, I firmly brought him back to music every time he strayed on to the troubles of the world. Meeting him by chance a few days later, I was mildly amused when he said: 'I'm so glad you made me talk about music.' Yes, his tendency to spout sweeping generalities and his instinct for publicity could be described as faults, but they paled into insignificance beside the integrity of his music-making. Orchestral players will tell you he was no conductor, yet they enjoyed working with him because, in a way, he personified the music.

CENTENARY RELEASES

The centenary celebrations this year will focus on the films and the myriad recordings. Sony Classical's six-disc RCA box includes unpublished Beethoven *Spring* and *Kreutzer* Sonatas from 1949 with Hephzibah. Warner's magisterial tribute – 80 CDs, 11 DVDs and a book – reissues many things not

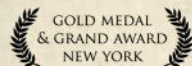


From left to right: with Pierre Monteux – he and Menuhin began their recording partnership with the Bach Double in 1932; with David Oistrakh in Paris; visiting wounded soldiers

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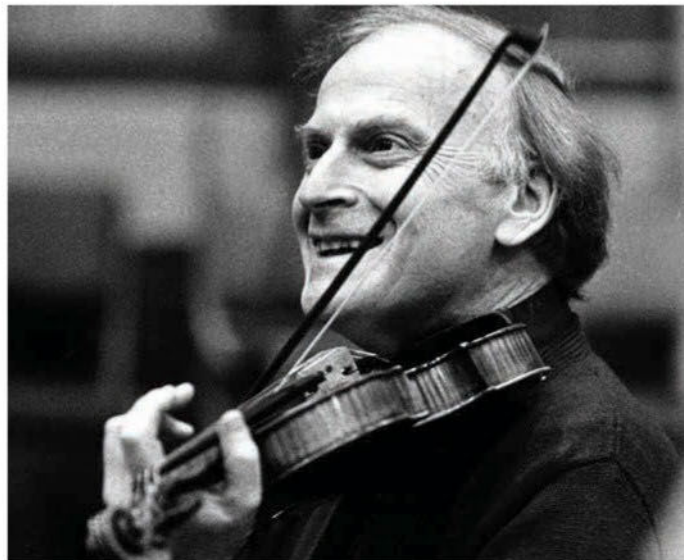
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previously on CD, as well as unpublished items such as the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the RPO and Boult (*sans* cadenza but impressive) and Schubert's String Quintet and Octet. (Menuhin rarely played the Tchaikovsky but DG has a 1949 live performance with Fricsay in which the *Canzonetta* seems to distil all the pain of the Tsarist pogroms.)

Two great concerto interpretations were the Beethoven – perhaps best done in 1947 with Furtwängler, although I love the 1960 Silvestri for its depiction of the Menuhin tone – and the Bartók Second, recorded three times with his friend

Antal Doráti. One could add the Elgar but, for me, neither studio recording satisfies: the overpraised 1932 version, with indulgent conducting by the composer, is too slow, the 1965 remake with Boult slightly studio-bound. My favourite, though far from perfect, is the live 1969 performance from the Royal Albert Hall with Boult and the LPO. The Bach Double was redone nicely with Gioconda De Vito (1953) and Christian Ferras (1959). A favourite Mozart is the D major, K218, with John Pritchard (1954); and all the stereo Bach or



Great musician, even greater man: Menuhin had an 'infinite love of humanity'

Mozart concertos from the late 1950s and early '60s can be recommended (the *Adelaide*, recorded in 1934 and repeated in 1974, is a Marius Casadesu forgery). For the Mendelssohn-Bruch coupling, the recording featuring the former with Susskind (1956) and the latter with Kurtz (1958) still weaves its magic. Although Menuhin was not a great viola player, he got under the skin of *Harold en Italie* with Colin Davis (1962). Perhaps reflecting his bowing problems, some concertos had many edits, detracting from their spontaneity.

Menuhin unaccompanied had a special aura. For

Bach's six masterpieces, I far prefer the 1956-57 set, a judicious balance of wisdom, impetus and that 'spirit of reverence' which Menuhin felt was essential; and for the Bartók, either the 1947 or the 1957 will do. He had two familial piano partners who brought out the best in him, his brother-in-law Louis Kentner and his beloved sister Hephzibah. You can generally bet on the former, while the latter is at her best in more lyrical Classical music, although she rises to Bartók's First Sonata (1957) and Enescu's Third (1966). Try comparing the two pianists in the

MENUHIN: *My musical grandfather*

Daniel Hope reflects on the close relationship he had with his lifelong friend and mentor

Yehudi Menuhin is the reason I became a violinist. For my parents, life in 1970s South Africa had become intolerable, marked as it was by that tragedy mingled with farce, so characteristic of the appalling apartheid regime. In the end, they had no option but to leave the country, but my father was only offered a so-called exit permit. This meant you could leave but never return.

My parents eventually settled in London, where very soon their money ran out. We had nowhere to go.

At the 11th hour, facing a calamity, we had some incredible luck: an employment agency offered my mother a compelling choice of jobs – secretary to either the Archbishop of Canterbury or the violinist Yehudi Menuhin. She chose Menuhin, and their association lasted 24 years until his death.

Our life changed immediately and forever. For the next few years, I grew up in Menuhin's house in Highgate, north London, where my mother would take me every day to play while she worked. Yehudi left his Guarneri del Gesù in an open violin case on the table – he never put it away. He once said to me: 'One has to play every day. One is like a bird, and can you imagine a bird saying, "I'm tired today, I don't feel like flying"?' To this day, I can still remember his sound – it remains in my ear, unique and fascinatingly beautiful.

Where does one even begin to summarise a unique career spanning 75 years of one of the greatest musicians in history? Perhaps by mentioning Menuhin's professional debut in 1924 in San Francisco at the age of seven? Or his debut in Berlin in 1929, after which Albert Einstein exclaimed: 'Now I know there is a God in heaven!' But what about his performance and legendary recording of the Elgar Violin Concerto under the composer's baton in 1932? Or his visit to the liberated concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen with Benjamin Britten in 1945? And let's not forget his controversial decision to return to Germany in 1947 and to perform with Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic, the first Jewish artist after the war to do so.

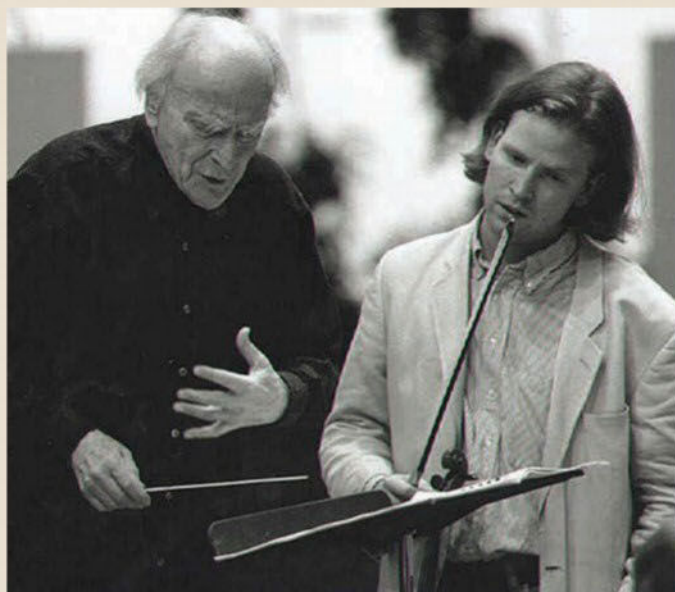
Early on in my life, I had the chance to study Bartók's Duos with Menuhin. It was an incredible experience for me, and an introduction to Bartók's extraordinary music. Many years later, with Menuhin in his role as conductor, we performed more than 60 concerts around the world, including almost all of the standard violin concertos, as well as some contemporary works.

On March 7, 1999, I played Alfred Schnittke's Violin Concerto in Düsseldorf, conducted by Lord Menuhin. It was to be Yehudi's final concert. After the Schnittke, Menuhin encouraged me to play an encore. I spontaneously chose *Kaddish*, Ravel's musical version of the Jewish prayer for the dead. I had grown up on Menuhin's unique interpretation of

Franck (1955, Kentner, and 1959, Hephzibah). As for the chamber music, not much of it competes with the specialists, and it must be said that Menuhin sometimes plays too loudly. A personal favourite is Mozart's E major Trio, K542, with Kentner and Gaspar Cassadó (1960); but on the 1966 Mozart piano quartets with Fou Ts'ong and Walter Gerhardt, Cassadó can hardly be heard (how ironic that the LP was issued in his memory). The Brahms String Sextets Nos 1 and 2 are, despite balance flaws, played *con amore*. As for contemporary music, important 20th-century works by Ernest Bloch, Carl Nielsen, Michael Tippett, Frank Martin, Andrzej Panufnik and others punctuate Menuhin's studio productions, performed with dedication, passion, fire and, above all, respect for each score.

One cannot sum up a thoughtful, complex, driven personality such as that of Yehudi Menuhin in a few words. Books have been written without baring his soul. Yet for all his occasional follies, when it mattered he was usually on the side of the angels. Politically he was a bridge-builder. He founded an English music school and a Swiss academy. He started a violin competition – this year, it is taking place in London just before what would have been his 100th birthday. He had infinite reserves of kindness, patience and love of humanity, and it was a pleasure to talk with him, as I did on a number of occasions. Menuhin lived and breathed music and adored sharing it with audiences. I often think of the time I asked him about Enescu's Second Sonata, which he had never played in concert. Straight off, he hummed me the themes. A rare artist indeed, and a great man. **G**

► To read reviews of the Sony and Warner box-sets, see page 108; to win the Warner box-set, enter our competition at <http://bit.ly/yehudicom>




Close bond: Menuhin and Hope discuss Prokofiev's Second Concerto in Gstaad, 1996

this work and wanted to dedicate it to him. Menuhin pushed me out onto the stage and sat among the orchestra listening to it. Perhaps it may have been in some way prophetic. Five days later, he passed away.

Yehudi called himself my 'musical grandfather', and there's hardly a passage in all of these great works where I don't stop for a minute and think of him.

► Daniel Hope's new DG recording, 'My Tribute to Yehudi Menuhin', is reviewed on page 67

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Untitled (detail), 1980, courtesy
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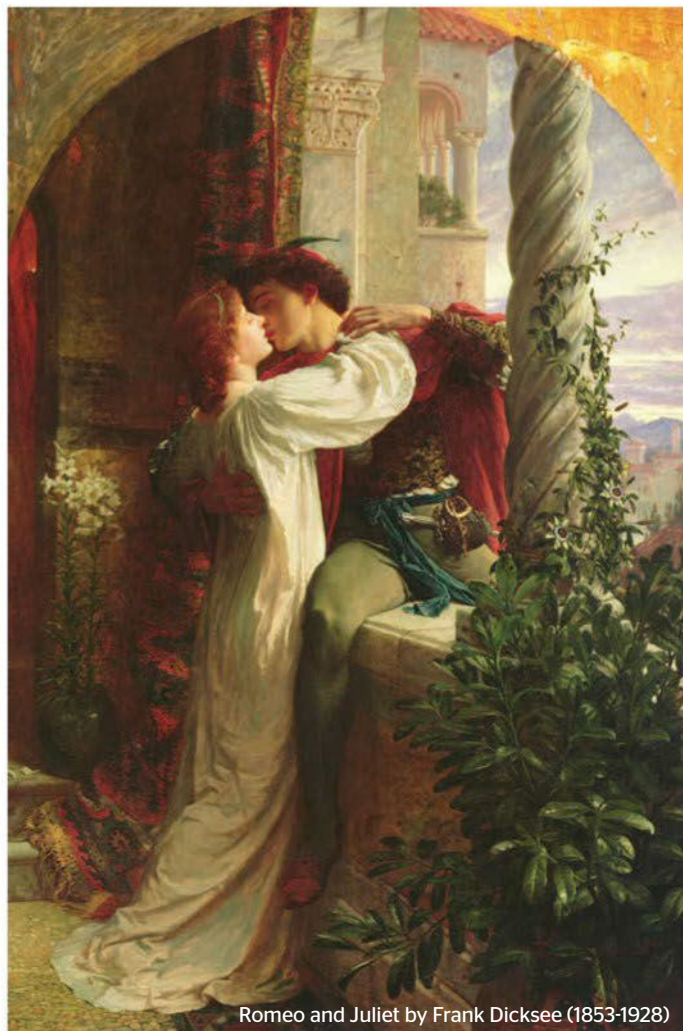



The interpreter of my life' was how Berlioz described Shakespeare, in a characteristically

grand statement. The sentiment, however, was by no means uniquely his own. Each age views, and to some extent, reinvents Shakespeare in its own image, and the 19th-century Romantics, whether in music, literature or fine art, saw in him a confirmation of their own identity and preoccupations. Some might nowadays argue that their assumptions were on occasion misguided, and that their views of Shakespeare square uneasily with those of our own time. But our views are, in part, still coloured by theirs, and Shakespeare's impact in the 19th century was seismic, in ways that previous eras had not experienced.

Berlioz was not the first composer to be drawn to Shakespeare, but his reaction was the most extreme. Though the tale of what amounted to an obsession on his part is frequently told, it needs, perhaps, to be placed in the wider cultural context, which the composer, in his *Memoirs*, tends to play down. On September 11, 1827, he went to a performance of *Hamlet* given by Charles Kemble's company at the Odéon in Paris and, though his English was minimal, he fell violently in love with the play, its author, and the Irish actress Harriet Smithson, cast as Ophelia: his feelings intensified four days later when he saw her as Juliet. His description of his experience is couched in terms both ecstatic and religious. He casts himself as Lazarus and Shakespeare as Christ: 'I saw...I understood...that I had risen from the dead and that I must get up and walk.' The sense of Shakespeare ushering in new life and, with it, new expressive worlds and possibilities, defines his music.

Berlioz makes only a passing reference, however, to 'the enthusiastic support' for Shakespeare on the part of 'the new school of literature, led by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Alfred de Vigny'. All three were, in fact, present at the same



Romeo and Juliet by Frank Dicksee (1853-1928)

EMBRACING *Shakespeare's* world

When 19th-century symphonic composers were drawn to Shakespeare, some remarkable concert works resulted, writes Tim Ashley

tragedy and comedy, its emotional and sexual ambiguities, its violence and passion, licensed both the direct expression of personal emotion and drastic experimentation with form.

Berlioz's Shakespearean works aim at the dissolution and re-creation of genres in an attempt to capture the poetic and dramatic essence of the plays. The overture *Le roi Lear* (1831), with its slow introduction followed by a hurtling *allegro*, is in some respects the most conventional. But the introduction, with

performance of *Hamlet*, and were comparably impressed. De Vigny's *Le more de Venise*, a version of *Othello*, was controversially taken into the repertory of the Comédie-Française in 1829. A year later, Hugo caused a furore with *Hernani* by grafting elements of Shakespearean versification onto a play written in Alexandrine couplets, the traditional metre of French poetic drama.

The continental discovery of Shakespeare was to some extent contemporaneous both with his rediscovery in Britain and the burgeoning of the Romantic movement itself. The Age of Reason found him slipshod, and the late-17th and early-18th centuries classicised him in reworkings that attempted to adhere to Aristotelian ideas of dramatic unity. Romanticism rebelled against such constraints, and the British theatrical reversion to something approximating the original texts coincided with the *Sturm und Drang* movement in Germany, the rise of the Gothic novel, and the growing cult of the Byronic hero: the ultimate Romantic outsider, attractive, shameless and existentially guilty.

The early 19th century was also an age of great translations, nowhere more so than in the German-speaking world where August Wilhelm Schlegel's versions of Shakespeare were – and still are – regarded as a landmark in the language. In France, the legacy of Classical theatre, with its aristocratic associations, proved pervasive until the Revolution and persisted into the Napoleonic era. For the French Romantics, Shakespearean drama, with its blurring of genres between

its imperious string phrases and firm, yet gentle answering woodwind, re-enacts in sonic terms the opening confrontation between Lear and Cordelia, and the *allegro* depicts the storm, psychological and metaphysical, that forms its consequences.

In *Lélio, ou Le retour à la vie*, for narrator, soloists, chorus and orchestra, premiered the following year, the form, however, is shockingly new. Conceived as a sequel to his *Symphonie fantastique*, it depicts the process of psychological recovery from the symphony's overtly personal malaise, in which immersion in Shakespearean drama offers eventual redemption from the Gothic-novel trappings of the *Symphonie Fantastique*'s narrative and emotional landscape. The score, some of it pasticcio, assembles new and pre-existing material, and Berlioz explicitly aligns Shakespeare with Romanticism by placing him alongside Goethe and the fashionable Irish poet Thomas Moore. And in the second-movement 'Choeur d'ombres', a reworking of the 'Méditation' from *La mort de Cléopâtre* which evokes the melancholic mood of *Hamlet*, the eponymous protagonist loses his sardonic humour and is reimagined as something of a Byronic loner, a view that Berlioz later reinforced in his lofty *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet* in 1844. Redemption is brought about, however, by the choral *Fantaisie sur la Tempête de Shakespeare* of 1830. Rippling pianos evoke the 'noises, sounds and sweet airs' of Prospero's island, while ricocheting strings suggest the impending storm. In marked contrast to the present-day emphasis on Prospero as protagonist, the narrative focuses on the relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda, whom the chorus offer 'a new life' ('un novello viver'), symbolic of *Lélio*'s significance as a whole.

In Berlioz's 'Roméo et Juliette', the formalities of the Capulets' ball are replaced by well-nigh orgiastic revelries

The dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette*, dating from 1839, represents, in many ways, the greatest of all Romantic responses to Shakespeare. Those who view it as an unwieldy hybrid are missing the point that it mirrors the complexities of Shakespearean dramaturgy by folding a multiplicity of vocal and orchestral genres into a single work. The opening orchestral fugue for the feuding Montagues and Capulets leads into a series of motets and songs that spell out the narrative before a sequence of symphonic and choral movements distil key scenes and speeches from the play. The tensions are eventually resolved in an operatic finale of Meyerbeerian weight for Friar Laurence and full chorus.

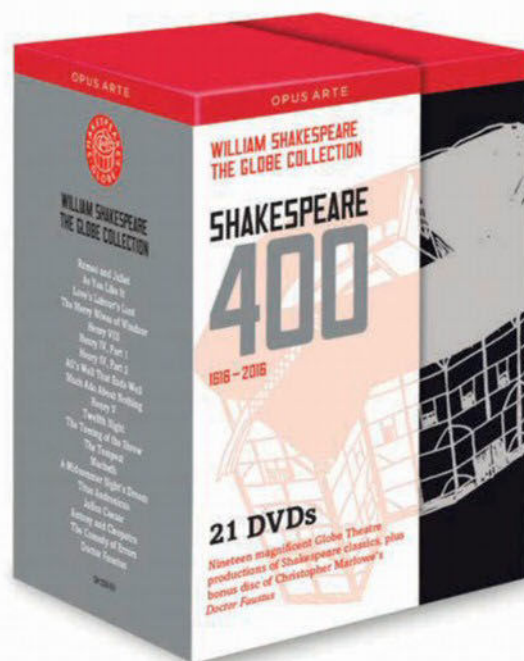
Ironically, it is based not on Shakespeare's original, but on a version, used by Kemble's company, by David Garrick, who rewrote the final pages to allow Juliet to wake from her drugged sleep before Romeo's death rather than after it. Berlioz pulls away from the play in tone: the Shakespearean formalities of the Capulets' ball, where the lovers' language coalesces into sonnets, are replaced by well-nigh orgiastic revelries; the *scène d'amour* suggests mature sexuality rather than teenage desire; and the 'Queen Mab' Scherzo lacks some of the darkness of Mercutio's original speech, which equates love with madness.

Queen Mab gave Berlioz some anxiety, however, for in 1831, he suggested the speech as a possible subject to Mendelssohn and subsequently became antsy at the thought he might actually tackle it. Mendelssohn had got to Shakespeare first, with his Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, inspired by Schlegel's translation and written in 1826, when he was only 17

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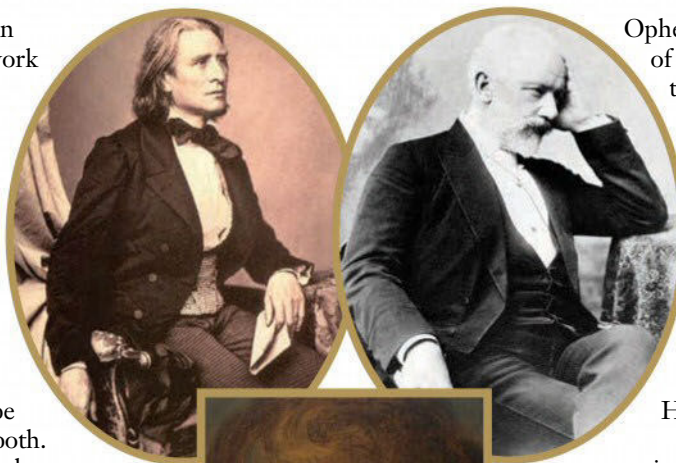
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(the incidental music came later in 1842). The first Shakespearean work for the concert hall, it was comparably, if more discreetly, revolutionary. Though its form, a tautly woven sonata, is conservative, its scampering fairy music redefined the parameters of texture and sonority. Berlioz could not have written *Roméo et Juliette* without it, and the composers who tackled Shakespeare in his and Mendelssohn's wake would be dependent on the innovations of both.

Tchaikovsky was also drawn to the same three plays that dominated Berlioz's imagination with his Fantasy-Overtures *Romeo and Juliet* (1869, revised in 1870 and 1880) and *The Tempest* (1873), and the Overture-Fantasia *Hamlet* (1888). The first two can be seen as coloured by his attitudes to his own sexuality. As in Berlioz's interpretation, there is a sense of gathering eroticism in the depiction of Romeo and Juliet, whose passion is now fiercely under threat from the music associated with the Montague-Capulet feud. The relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda is comparably central to *The Tempest*, but their escalating desire – this is Tchaikovsky at his sexiest – is surrounded by frequent suggestions of unease, most notably in the eerie depiction of a ship rocking at sea that opens the work and then brings it to a close in a mood far removed from the play's reconciliatory ending. Hamlet, meanwhile, is once more the moody outsider, more neurotic, less noble than his Berliozian counterpart, harried by his spectral father and angrily wary of Ophelia's affection. The form is again experimental, suggesting Hamlet's uncertainties and indecisions by undermining the security of what sounds like a big sonata exposition with the introduction of new material where we would expect a fully worked-out development.

Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet* is often compared unfavourably to Liszt's symphonic poem of the same name, written in 1858 following a performance of the play in Weimar in which the title-role was played by the Polish-born actor Bogumil Dawison, whose interpretation Liszt admired: his letter to Agnes Street-Klindworth in January two years previously contains a lengthy analysis of Dawison's treatment of Hamlet's relationship with



From top left, clockwise: Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Berlioz developed a strong kinship with Shakespeare

Ophelia. In ways that echo the opening of Berlioz's *Lear*, Liszt dramatises the couple's confrontation in Act 3, Scene 1. The brooding introduction captures the existential uncertainties of 'To be, or not to be', before a woodwind recitative introduces Ophelia, her hesitant utterances provoking a violent *allegro* of repudiation, its harmonic irresolution suggesting the vacillating anguish of Hamlet's emotions.

For Smetana, in contrast, the gravitation towards Shakespeare was political. The appearance of the plays in the Czech language in the 1850s had nationalist connotations at a time when the Austro-Hungarian authorities were bent on imposing German as a uniform language on the Empire. In 1851, *Richard III* was the first play to be published, and Smetana responded, in 1857, with his 'fantasia for full orchestra'. The halting rhythms of the principal theme suggest the king's awkward gait, but Smetana's Richard is an altogether nobler, more sympathetic figure than Shakespeare's Machiavellian schemer, and this is a portrait of a grand rise to power, followed by a precipitate fall that is darkly and genuinely tragic. Romanticism had begun to romanticise.

Strauss's *Macbeth*, however, took Shakespeare into radically different territory. His first tone-poem and his first psychodrama, it was prophetic of much that followed, though

its awkward genesis – written before *Don Juan*, it was premiered after it and has a later opus number – has led to an underestimation of its importance. An atheist, distrustful of metaphysics, Strauss jettisoned the supernatural episodes (there are no witches or apparitions, not even Banquo's ghost), stripping the play down to a series of colloquies between the murderous Thane and his wife. There is a debt to Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* in the terrifying syncopations that represent the knocking on the castle door after Duncan's murder, while a Lisztian textual awareness informs the thematic structure. Lady Macbeth's 'Hie thee hither / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear' is printed in the score at the first appearance of the motifs that represent her. Her seductive, wheedling



Hamlet and Horatio at the Cemetery – a painting by Delacroix (1798-1863)

woodwind, followed by churning, throbbing strings, suggest mental instability from the outset, ushering us into the world of emotional extremes that the composer was to explore more fully in *Salome*, *Elektra* and the shell-shocked Menelaus of *Die Aegyptische Helena*.

Elgar's admiration for Strauss can be discerned in *Falstaff*, his symphonic study in C minor, first performed in 1913 – the last major Romantic score to be based on Shakespeare and a work that effectively brings him home to England. The narrative derives from the *Henry IV* plays, rather than *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and at its centre lies the relationship between Falstaff and Prince Hal, the future Henry V, who rejects his former friend and drinking companion when the duties of monarchy finally call. For all its wit and humour, the tone is predominantly elegiac, exposing 'the undercurrent of our failings and sorrows', to quote Elgar in a letter to Ernest Newman. The majestic, quintessentially 'Elgarian' melody that runs through it, reaching an almost oppressive climax near the close, represents Hal and the inflexible nobility of kingship. Though sometimes criticised as episodic, *Falstaff* ranks among Elgar's most richly ambiguous achievements.

The history of music's relationship with Shakespeare has to some extent been, and remains, symbiotic. In Act 3, Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, the prince instructs the players to 'hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature...and show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'. The Romantics held their own mirror up to Shakespeare and produced music of comparable greatness in his name. But in so doing they brought their own concerns, private and public, to bear upon his image and it is ultimately themselves – as well as him – that we find reflected back. **G**

FOUR SHAKESPEARE RECORDINGS

Bard-inspired works from Berlioz, Liszt, Smetana and Strauss



Berlioz: *Roméo et Juliette*

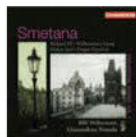
Vienna PO /
Colin Davis
Phillips (10/96)

The ultimate Romantic evocation of Shakespeare, this is a score that celebrates freedom from Classical restraint. Berlioz dissolves genre boundaries as he strives to capture the emotional directness, shifts of tone and multiple ambiguities of the Bard's work.



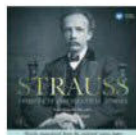
Liszt: *Hamlet*
Leipzig Gewandhaus
Orchestra /
Kurt Masur
Warner (2/82)

Arguably the greatest orchestral work based on *Hamlet*, Liszt's superbly realised character portrait is structured around Act 3, Scene 1 of the play, which contains the 'To be, or not to be' speech and the Prince of Denmark's catastrophic rejection of Ophelia.



Smetana:
Richard III
BBC Philharmonic /
Gianandrea Noseda
Chandos (11/07)

A political work with nationalist overtones, it was inspired by the first translation into Czech of any of Shakespeare's plays. Smetana's reimagining of Richard as a tragically noble figure strays far from the original, though the score is unquestionably powerful.



Strauss: *Macbeth*
Staatskapelle
Dresden /
Rudolf Kempe
Warner (10/73)

Strauss reinvents Shakespeare as psychodrama, stripping the play down to a taut sequence of colloquies between the murderous Thane and his mentally unstable wife. This is Strauss's first tone-poem and a work that contains, in embryo, much that was to follow.

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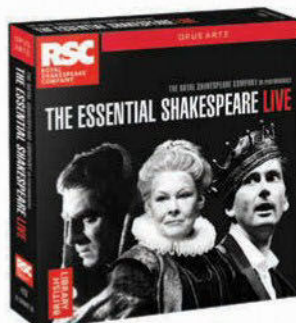
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OUTSIDE THE BOX

For John Williams, thinking differently – about music, sound, the guitar itself – has always come naturally. Martin Cullingford meets him as a 59-disc set is released to celebrate his 75th birthday

Forty-five minutes into my interview with John Williams, and we haven't moved beyond discussing the guitar's sound yet. From the perspective of an admirer of the instrument this is the stuff of dreams; from the perspective of a writer with a three-page feature to file about Williams's life and legacy, it's a little more concerning. I needn't have worried though: I finally turn the recorder off after more than two hours, and 30 minutes later we're still standing chatting on his doorstep. Fascination with sound, and generosity of spirit: two hallmarks, then, of this most open-minded and inspiring of musicians.

To mark his 75th birthday on April 24, Sony Classical, his record company for most of his career, has produced a box-set of his complete recordings for it (and its forerunner CBS). Beginning in 1964 and running until 2006, it's a survey of an extraordinarily broad and exploratory career, crossing continents as it embraces Bach and

Barrios, Scarlatti and Sculthorpe. Just as the guitar, or at least its ancestors, did, uniting Europe and South America with musical bonds as closely wound as a string on a tuning peg – and just as prone to stretch a little, creating a different and unexpected tone all of its own. Williams grew up in Australia (something his accent still reminds us), before making that most international of cities, London, his home. Perhaps it's no surprise that he was to possess little patience for the boundaries by which others set so much store. Sony Classical's celebratory set is a fascinating insight into a questing musical mind, brilliantly performed and beautifully recorded – which brings us neatly back to sound.

'I've always been very interested in the sound, in the editing and the whole production,' says Williams, something immediately backed up by a series of recollections about recording sessions and production colleagues – including of when it didn't work so well. He can even recall the moment of



'People in retrospect have put it to me that I'm pulling down barriers – that's never occurred to me'

epiphany, while recording music by Paganini. 'There were some finger squeaks, and I thought you couldn't get rid of them because there are notes in between'. But popping briefly out, he returned to find producer Paul Myers and engineer Ed Michalski had 'taken a millimetre of tape, at the head of the squeak, out. You couldn't hear it, and it made it as smooth as anything. I was so impressed.' Ever since, he recalls, 'I've always been interested in that', getting involved whenever he could and – during the '90s – even producing himself.

All the above is a passion – or at least interest – shared by many a recording artist. Williams, however, extended his obsession with sound quality into live music-making. From fairly early on, when performing live, he's used amplification – though not to make things louder per se. 'Ideally, I'd like everyone to hear what I hear. I'm serious about that.' Part of the explanation involves a technical understanding of the way different elements

of guitar sounds travel: 'the percussive pluck, the initial dynamic of the pluck itself, carries further than the sustain. Now that doesn't happen on a piano – you play a note in here on the piano, in this room, and its sustain will be in relation to the initial attack on the note. On a guitar, it's not.' The important thing to note is Williams's observation that what he hears, the sound he's crafting, the colours he's creating, are not what someone sitting in the auditorium was hearing. And he simply didn't think that was good enough, and so spent a lot of time experimenting with speakers and amplification until he achieved something that sounded natural.

Famously, for guitarists anyway, this interest in sound even led to backing the innovations of a mould-breaking luthier, the Australian Greg Smallman. They first met in Sydney in 1978 when Smallman asked him to play a guitar he'd made and let him know what he thought. 'I said, "Well it's okay – it's not

exceptional, it's quite good," and he looked at me and said "Yeah. I thought so". Most makers don't say that, they start getting defensive.' When they next met a year later, Smallman began by praising the guitar Williams played at the time – by Spanish maker Fleta – but asking if there was "anything about that instrument which you would like to improve, which you would like to be a bit better"? And that's where we started.'

The result of their discussions was a completely different way of thinking about how the guitar's soundboard is supported. Traditionally this is by wooden struts arranged like a fan; Smallman's innovation was to use lattice bracing made from carbon fibre, which allows the soundboard to be much thinner. It does make it louder, but that's not, says Williams, the point – it's just a by-product. It's about the colour you can get throughout a note, and across the notes, at whatever volume you play. 'It's not what you'd call a typically Spanish sound,' he says. 'I have to say I can see that, and I understand that's very important to people, and everyone thinks their taste is the best – but for me it's a very simple question: to have a wider dynamic range, to have a greater range of tone colour, is more musical. And it's borne out, whenever I play with other instruments – a flautist, or a singer, they immediately think "now we're talking!"'

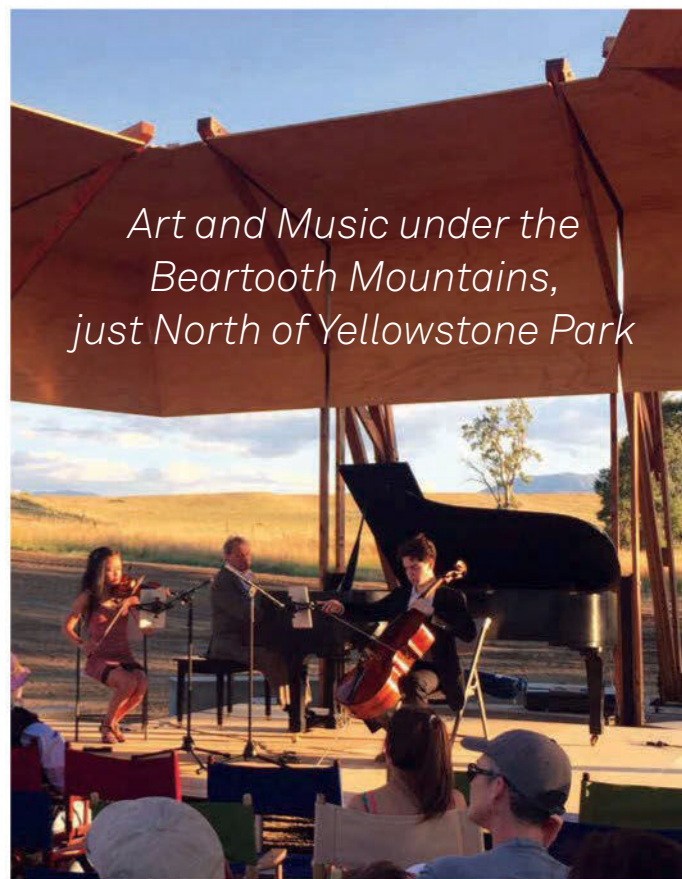
And this is also the first of many points in our interview when Williams leans over and picks up his guitar to demonstrate. When one sits right in front of him, listening to him play, the instrument has the same precision of sound as the most vivid of recordings. Which is, Williams would argue, exactly the point.

Something else that has defined Williams's career is what we might call 'breaking down borders' between genres, but in reality this is more a reflection of the fact that from fairly early on in his career, Williams demonstrated a healthy disregard for divisions between musical styles.

'People in retrospect have put it to me that I'm pulling down barriers – that's never occurred to me,' he says. Some of his interaction with those from different traditions stemmed from chance encounters – like meeting jazz legends Ronnie Scott, John Dankworth and Cleo Lane at an African benefit concert in the late '60s, which led to him playing at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club. (At this point he again picks up the guitar to demonstrate the particular moment, a descending line in a Manuel Ponce piece, that was Scott's favourite.) Film music, meanwhile, led to working with Stanley Myers, whose ultra-popular *Cavatina*, famously used in *The Deer Hunter*, became associated with Williams. One of Williams's later Sony recordings, 'The Magic Box', saw him collaborating with African musicians.

'It's the natural thing of living without any preconceptions,' Williams says, and it's something which didn't just apply to musical genres – borders between 'high art' and 'popular entertainment', if you like, were equally irrelevant for Williams, who happily appeared on many a mainstream variety show. 'People were quite horrified when I did *The Val Doonican* and *Billy Cotton Band* shows,' he recalls. But what classical musician wouldn't now seize every opportunity to get their art in front of prime-time television audiences? Opportunities today are fewer. But Williams doesn't seem to be one to look backwards, countering any hint of nostalgia with generous and full praise (and admiration) for today's generation of young guitarists, singling out for particular mention some of those who work across styles, just as he does. Such as Laura Snowdon, who combines a career premiering a Julian Anderson piece at Wigmore Hall with playing in an alternative folk-ensemble, Tir Eolas.

When I try to attribute today's happy state of affairs to his own pioneering efforts over many decades, he bats that away



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Disc of the Month

Tchaikovsky / Khachaturian: Piano Concertos

Xiayin Wang / RSN0 / Peter Oundjian

After a year off the concert platform to start a family, Xiayin Wang, a specialist in the romantic repertoire, gives us a new recording of two relatively little-played piano concertos: Tchaikovsky's Second Concerto, in its much lesser-known yet extremely virtuosic original version, and that of Khachaturian. The disc also marks the 125th anniversary of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, here conducted by its Music Director, Peter Oundjian.

CHSA 5167

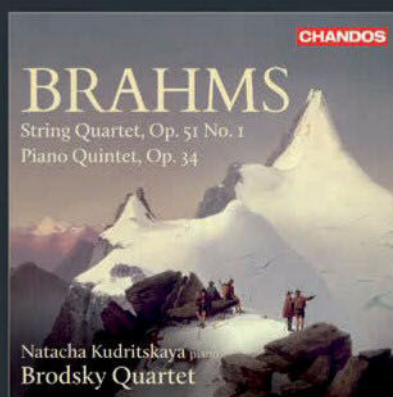


Neeme Järvi conducts Ibort

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande / Neeme Järvi

Neeme Järvi and the OSR continue their exploration of French orchestral music with this fourth album: a merry collection of the vigorously ebullient music of Jacques Ibort. Again, the unique acoustic of Geneva's Victoria Hall is perfectly captured in surround sound on this SACD.

CHSA 5168



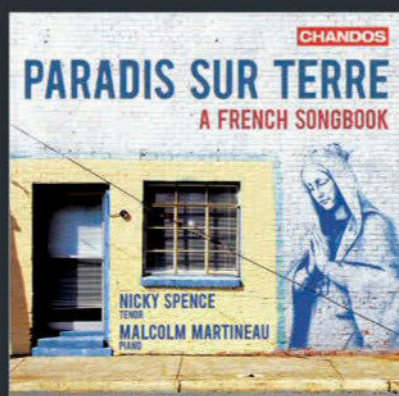
Brahms

String Quartet No. 1 / Piano Quintet

Natacha Kudritskaya / Brodsky Quartet

The Brodsky Quartet presents this second volume of Brahms's complete string quartets, *The Guardian* having praised its 'immaculate' performance in the first one. It is joined in that early masterpiece, the Piano Quintet by the prodigiously gifted young Ukrainian pianist Natacha Kudritskaya.

CHAN 10892

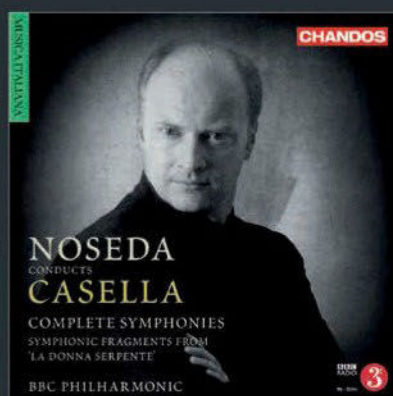


Paradis sur terre A French Songbook

Nicky Spence / Malcolm Martineau

A Young Singer of the Year nominee at the 2015 International Opera Awards, Nicky Spence joins Malcolm Martineau, just honoured with an OBE, in this unique collection of songs by Caplet, Boulanger, Debussy, and Chaminade, a repertoire very rarely performed in public in the composers' own time.

CHAN 10893



Casella

The Symphonies, etc.

BBC Philharmonic / Gianandrea Noseda

Conductor of the Year at the 2015 Musical America Awards, Noseda has recently been appointed chief conductor of the National SO, Washington DC. To celebrate his many achievements, we have collected the three symphonies, and more, from his Casella series in this specially packaged two-CD set.

CHAN 10895(2)

too. 'I had it very lucky,' he counters. 'I had it so easy, because I was following in Julian's footsteps.' That's Julian Bream, of course, seven years his senior, who in the 1960s not only passed on to the younger player work he couldn't take on himself, but invited Williams, aged only 25, to play duos with him. 'He could have felt I was a bit of a rival in some ways, and justifiably so, but the facts are that I had it easy,' recalls Williams. 'There weren't a lot of us around – I don't know how Julian would feel, but if I was the age a lot of these young players are now, I'd really have to be on my toes.' Three recordings resulting from their collaboration can be found in the Sony set, across a complete breadth of repertoire from William Lawes to Maurice Ravel. As the two leading classical guitarists of their day, their respective followers set up 'rival camps' which, Williams recalls, held that '[Bream] is a bit more spontaneous, or he comes over that way, and I come over cold and controlled – those were the popular views. It was quite amusing to us!' Unfair to him of course, though they certainly had a very different approach to playing, something videos of them playing together well reveal. Bream seems hunched over his instrument, drawing sound from the strings with a vivid physical engagement, effort and emotion wrought across his face. Williams, by contrast, sits upright, his posture one of controlled concentration. (But watch closely and you'll see that, every few bars, Williams looks across to

Bream with an expression of vigilance and scrutiny: a mark of deeply collaboratively playing). Close your eyes, and I'd venture each communicates supreme technicality and musicality, and we're fortunate we have both. Even so, Williams says there is a difference in style – and indeed celebrates it. 'We each thought that the excitement, and even the reason for being a duo, is that you're different. Why have exactly the same?' By contrast, he recalls his partnership with Itzhak Perlman – you can hear them together in Paganini and Giuliani – where, he suggests 'our ways of feeling about the music, and the way we phrase and feel the pulse of the music, is almost identical. Whereas with Julian it isn't. But because it's two guitars, with Julian it's the difference that makes our duo.'

Despite the majority of albums being solo, collaborations run throughout the set. Conductors in orchestral works include Eugene Ormandy in Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and Castelnuova-Tedesco's *Guitar Concerto No 1*, and Charles Groves in Rodrigo's *Fantasia para un gentilhombre* and Stephen Dodgson's *Concerto for Guitar and Chamber Orchestra No 1*. Tenor Wilfred Brown joined Williams for a record of songs featuring Dowland and traditional songs, plus Britten's *Songs from the Chinese*. One disc of music by Rudolf Straube, Manuel Ponce and Stephen Dodgson sees him joined by harpsichordist Rafael Puyana and Jordi Savall on viola da gamba...and we've only just reached the early 1970s. One collaboration worth highlighting because it shouldn't work, but does, is that with organist Peter Hurford, the latter's organ a sonically-rich sea on which Williams's guitar delicately dances.

'To be honest, it's more enjoyable playing with other people,' says Williams. 'On your own, it's a different thing: it's an interpretation of however you feel about the piece – whatever you want to do with it is the most important thing. When you're with other people, you've all got other ways of doing that but the process of doing it together is what's enjoyable.'

Then there are the collaborations with contemporary composers – Steven Goss, Stephen Dodgson and Ross Edwards are just three whose works Williams feels so strongly about that he self-released a series of post-Sony albums to ensure they had the deserved wider attention.

And, last but not least, collaboration with a label. 'They were absolutely fantastic, from beginning to end, always – I could have recorded what I liked,' he says of his relationship with CBS/Sony. When asked to name those projects of which he's most proud, after a thoughtful pause he says: 'The Great Paraguayan' (an album which embodies his advocacy for the music of Barrios, for which he was proud to receive the Paraguayan Presidential medal), 'El Diablo Suelto' (music of Venezuela), his African collaboration 'The Magic Box', and his disc devoted to the music of Leo Brouwer – and then he repeats them all by way of emphasis.

There's been a lot of looking back, which is perhaps only natural given the release of a career-encompassing box-set, and a milestone birthday.

But retrospection somehow doesn't seem to fully fit the Williams I meet and share these hours with. When I ask what being 'semi-retired' (his phrase) means, he says it means no tours – 'I've done hotels and flying' – or professional concerts, aside from the series at the Globe Theatre he's been curating. But recording on his own label will continue, as will composition – his own label launched with a disc of his own works, one of which, *From a Bird*, has since been taken up by Xuefei Yang.

His current project is writing discs of 'library music' – short pieces categorised by mood or atmosphere, which can be instantly incorporated into films or adverts, with all usage rights pre-approved. An unexpected project for a prestigious virtuoso's semi-retirement perhaps – but then why not? He clearly enjoys it – 'lovely fun!' – and when I listen to one of the discs, it's to discover some charming melodic miniatures, a genre the guitar repertoire has long had a home and heart for. Even though he wrote the pieces, he seems to credit the 'major job' as being that facing the team who have to 'dream up' titles and descriptions for them. It's tempting to try to pick a few to illustrate John

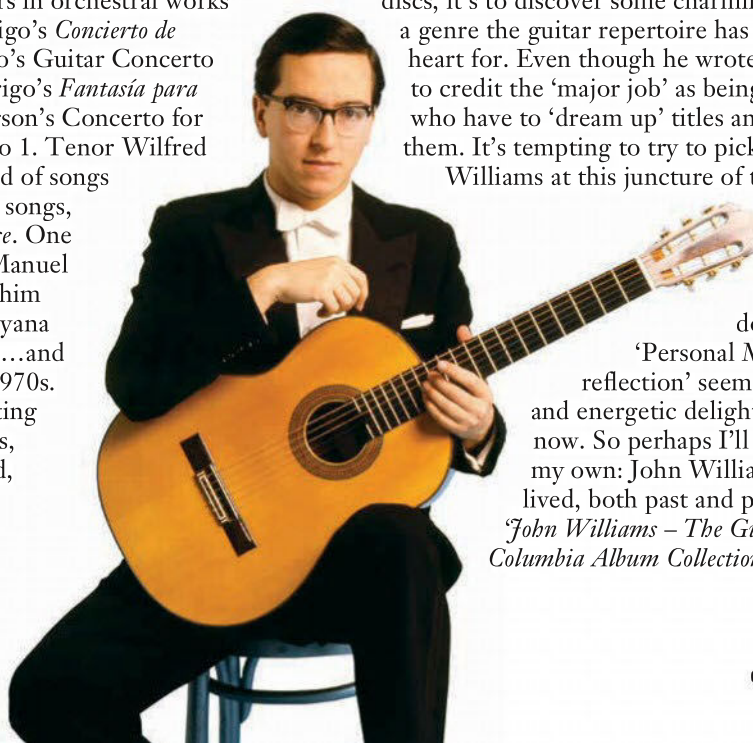
Williams at this juncture of this life. He's obviously

left behind 'Life on the Go – Busy, repetitive motif, but then neither

does the more elegiac

'Personal Memories – Thoughtful reflection' seem to capture his evident and energetic delight in what he's up to right now. So perhaps I'll just reach for words of my own: John Williams at 75 – a life well lived, both past and present tense. **G**

'John Williams – The Guitarist: the Complete Columbia Album Collection' is available on Sony





Scarlatti's music was what started it all, and it's to Scarlatti that Yevgeny Sudbin has returned for another landmark in his recording venture with the BIS label.

Back in 2005, when Sudbin was a mere 25 years old but already hailed as one of the brightest stars in the pianistic firmament, he entered into a pact with BIS to produce something in the region of 15 CDs across a period of 10 years. BIS was shrewd. In the intervening years Sudbin has not only justified the faith put in him but has proved himself to be a musician of penetrating insight and riveting musicality, an interpreter who draws you ineluctably and willingly into the very heart of the music he is playing. His discs have garnered glowing reviews, and I cannot be alone in keeping them all in a readily accessible place on the shelves so that they can easily be returned to for the mix of intellectual clarity and sheer joy of music-making that they convey. Allied to the piano-playing itself, Sudbin's own booklet-notes have thrown valuable light both on the music and on his thoughtful and thought-provoking approach to it.

Looking through that list of CDs since 2005, a certain pattern seems to emerge, in that solo recitals are interleaved with concerto discs and with others of Shostakovich, Rachmaninov, Borodin and Weinberg cello sonatas performed with Alexander Chaushian. But Sudbin scotches that idea. 'It might look carefully choreographed,' he says, 'but it's more down to coincidence. I didn't have any plan at the start, and I never planned more than a couple of CDs ahead.'

I wanted to have a variety of repertoire, because that's what I do in recitals. There were several composers who interested me: Medtner, and of course Rachmaninov, have always been special, but also I wanted to make sure not to neglect other composers that I felt close to as well. Over the 10 years, I've found that there is sometimes a good reason why people don't play certain things. The Medtner concertos, for example, demand a lot of work and rehearsal time, and the orchestra and conductor really need to have a good understanding of the music. But those are practical reasons, not musical ones.'

The first two discs to come out in 2005 were of Scarlatti sonatas and a coupling of Rachmaninov's *Variations on a Theme of Chopin* with the Piano Sonata No 2 in Sudbin's own version based on the hybrid of the original (1913) and revised (1931) scores devised and played by Vladimir Horowitz. The Scarlatti was released in the January, the Rachmaninov in September, and I suggest to Sudbin that it was a bold move for a young pianist, particularly a Russian-trained one, to make his recording debut with out-of-the-way Scarlatti rather than the more central Rachmaninov. 'It might appear that way,' he says, 'but I didn't set out to be controversial. It was just something I really wanted to do.'

His manager at the time had sent BIS some tracks of Sudbin playing Scarlatti, to which the decision-makers at the label were especially attracted. It was a 'toss of the coin' whether the Scarlatti or the Rachmaninov came out first, which leads to the question of how much input BIS had in the choice of repertoire. 'Actually,' says Sudbin, 'they gave me pretty much *carte blanche*' – a factor which has rendered the spectrum of his repertoire unusually diverse. Alongside the three Medtner concertos there

*'In Scarlatti,
you can feel
the force of
life itself'*

Yevgeny Sudbin's first recording for BIS was of Scarlatti and, 10 years into a prolific relationship, the pianist has returned to the same composer – but with many diversions along the way, writes Geoffrey Norris

have been some by Beethoven and Rachmaninov, together with recital discs ranging through Haydn, Chopin, Scriabin, Liszt, Saint-Saëns and Ravel. Most recently, Medtner and Rachmaninov have been reunited on a recital disc, and last year, coupled with Medtner's Concerto No 3, Sudbin produced a superlative performance of Scriabin's Concerto in F sharp minor in league with the Bergen Philharmonic and Andrew Litton. Sudbin acknowledges that 'the tricky thing [in the Scriabin] is the fluidity and flexibility of it. The orchestra has to sound as flexible as the piano, and there needs to be a balancing-out of the thickness of the orchestral writing and the delicacy of the piano part. A lot of orchestras are used to playing Mahler, but it's simply not appropriate to Scriabin, and you need to find a conductor who can lead you through the forest.'

Aside from the success that the series has enjoyed, BIS will also be gratified to know that Sudbin finds 'recording in general probably the single most important thing that matters to me'. Professionally, he means, for he is a family man as well, and when we meet he has just come back from taking his two children to the zoo.

'A live concert has other appeals,' he maintains. 'It's all about momentary impressions, for audiences as well as the performer, but there are also frustrations in that it is not always possible to achieve such detail in a concert as you can on a recording. Live performances are important, but artistically recordings are more satisfying. Through high resolution every phrase can be heard – you can't fool anybody – and recording also lets me bring music to a level that I don't think you can actually achieve in concert. In a concert the focus is more on the big picture than on detail. It is a very different art form.' I wonder whether, after producing so many CDs in a mere decade, he will continue to do so with the same intensity. 'I guess it depends,' he says, 'because the landscape for recording is changing a lot. Things are moving online; there's streaming, and I don't know in which shape or form recording will survive. I hope it continues, because I find that it is one of the few things that makes sense artistically. It's hard to predict, but in Russia there is a saying that you beat metal while it is hot.' Indeed, strike while the iron is hot. We all hope Sudbin will do that.

In any case, the series has so far left a few lacunae which need to be filled. Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Concertos were paired on one disc with the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä; the Third, with the same forces, was coupled with Mozart's Concerto No 24 in C minor, K491. 'The Minnesota Orchestra was a great choice,' Sudbin says. 'I loved Vänskä's Beethoven symphonies, and in the concertos it was a great match.' But that leaves Nos 1 and 2. Happily, though, they have just been recorded and are due out this year – not, however, with the Minnesota Orchestra (which was on strike when negotiations were under way) but with the Tapiola Sinfonietta. 'It's a very fine orchestra,' says Sudbin, 'and as chamber musicians they tend to play more like soloists – which is what you need for Beethoven 1 and 2.' The other big gap is in the Rachmaninov concerto repertoire. We have already had the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and the Fourth Concerto in its original (1926) version, and the First Concerto in its revised (1917) version, but Sudbin has in mind to record not only the Fourth Concerto in the definitive score of 1941 but also the First Concerto in the way that Rachmaninov conceived it as a student in the 1890s. More to the point, we can expect the Second and Third Concertos some time in the future, but I would not be thanked for divulging any further details of those.

In the meantime, though, we can sit back and enjoy Sudbin's playing on his new disc of Scarlatti, in which, as he says, he has



'Live performances are important, but recording lets me bring music to a level that I can't achieve in concert' – Evgeny Sudbin

been 'more careful about the variety and combination of sonatas than in the first CD,' though I can't imagine that there were many who were disappointed by the choices he made back in 2005. 'All the sonatas have something in them,' he says. 'There are little motivic elements that Scarlatti repeats and which some people find too repetitive, but there is so much that you can do with this music, especially on a modern piano. With Scarlatti in particular, you can get round those obstacles of repetitive elements that might get on people's nerves by means of varying the texture, the articulation, the colours. There are a million possibilities.' It is perhaps for his sparkling sonatas that Scarlatti is most familiar, the ones in which, as Sudbin says, 'Scarlatti absorbed the liveliness of Spain, the guitars, the local bands'. But alongside those he has chosen some of what he calls the 'spiritual, divine' sonatas, often in a minor key but also sometimes in the major – the second track of the new CD, the Sonata in A, Kk208, being a case in point. The sublime Sonata in F sharp, Kk318, is another. 'Scarlatti manages to speak with a "godlike" voice that is almost operatic, betraying an Italian influence,' says Sudbin. And it is in these sonatas as much as in the more acrobatic ones that, as Sudbin says, 'you can feel the force of life itself. They grip you and lift you up. They are gems. It's like a treasure hunt.' **G**

► To read our review of Sudbin's Scarlatti recording, turn to page 48

The loneliest lover, an all-powerful passion and a stepmother's shame. What's on in Summer 2016

ENO

Puccini
Madam Butterfly
16 May–7 July

Wagner
Tristan and Isolde
9 June–9 July

Janáček
Jenůfa
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GRAMOPHONE *Festival* GUIDE 2016

The next few months offer an array of spectacular festivals around Europe and North America. Browse our listings and take a look at our special-focus events that celebrate Shakespeare's anniversary

UK FESTIVALS

Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival

May 27 - June 11

Classical highlights of this multi-arts festival are a Salisbury Cathedral concert featuring Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto and Elgar's *Enigma* Variations, performed by violinist Benjamin Baker and the Philharmonia Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins. Also at the cathedral is the Early Opera Company, led by Christian Curnyn, performing Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. More opera can be found at Salisbury Playhouse with *Carmen*, presented by OperaUpClose. salisburyfestival.co.uk

Aldeburgh Festival

June 10-26

This year is the seventh and last under the artistic direction of pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard. The festival centrepiece sees him performing Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux* across four concerts, from sunrise to midnight on Sunday June 19, against the panoramic backdrops of Snape Maltings and RSPB Minsmere. The festival opener is *Illuminations*, a 75-minute piece fusing Britten's *Les illuminations* and *Young Apollo*, Debussy's String Quartet and music from John Adams's *Shaker Loops* alongside newly commissioned

staging, featuring contemporary circus performers, soprano Sarah Tynan, Aurora Orchestra and conductor Nicholas Collon. Another highlight is a four-concert residency from French period ensemble Les Siècles, which performs works by Julian Anderson, Benedict Mason and Rebecca Saunders. aldeburgh.co.uk

Bath International Music Festival

May 20-29

Classical music combines with jazz, world and folk in this, the festival's 68th year. Highlights include Richard Goode performing Schubert's last three piano sonatas, *Tenebrae* in Bath Abbey and Philip Higham playing the Bach Cello Suites. bathfestivals.org.uk/music

BBC Proms

July 15 - September 10

The weekend of July 23 and 24 is devoted to the BBC's Ten Pieces schools project, with Alpesh Chauhan conducting the BBC Philharmonic in the 10 works, which include *The Lark Ascending* and Anna Clyne's *Night Ferry*. Full details of the BBC Proms season are announced on April 13. bbc.co.uk/proms

Beverley and East Riding Early Music Festival

May 27-30

Spanning seven centuries of European music from Hildegard of Bingen to Mendelssohn, this year the festival celebrates the Virgin Mary. Guest artists include Florilegium, The Cardinal's Musick, theorist Elizabeth Kenny, soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, the Fitzwilliam Quartet and the Flautadors Recorder Quartet. The festival finale is Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in Beverley Minster, with singers from the University of York chamber choir joined by period-instrument musicians. ncem.co.uk/bemf

Bradfield Festival of Music

June 25 - July 2

Highlights this year include Ensemble Berlin and also Voces8, who perform the opening concert this year. Other notable performers include trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth with Kathryn Stott. Concerts take place at St Nicholas's Church, located in High Bradfield. bradfieldfestivalofmusic.co.uk

Branscombe Festival

July 29-31

This Devonshire festival, curated by

Ian Rosenblatt and Iain Burnside, consists of classical, opera and jazz performances, with cream tea served on Saturday afternoon and a hog roast in the evening. The Marian Consort presents a musical play about the life of Carlo Gesualdo, there's period-instrument chamber music from Florilegium, and a recital from soprano Serena Gamberoni and baritone Luca Salsi. The festival ends with a free concert on Branscombe beach by the Camborne Town Band. branscombefestival.co.uk

Brighton Early Music Festival

October 28 - November 13

With events taking place across Brighton and Hove, the theme this year is Nature and Science. A highlight includes a new play about Galileo with music from The Marian Consort and the Monteverdi String Band. Another festival production is *Gaia*, bringing together music and drama from the 16th and 17th centuries alongside film, projections, lighting and dance. bremf.org.uk

Brighton Festival

May 7-29

As it turns 50, the UK's largest and

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival
August 12-14

This Northumberland festival is hosted and directed by the Gould Piano Trio and clarinettist Robert Plane. Highlights include the premiere of Simon Rowland-Jones's *Trio No 2 (Eidfjord)*, and a late-night performance of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Shakespeare's 400th anniversary year is marked with works such as Korngold's *Much Ado about Nothing* suite. The Gould Trio's pianist, Benjamin Frith, gives a masterclass, and the festival service is played by organist Martin Neary. corbridgefestival.co.uk



Rehearsing at St Andrew's church, Corbridge

most established multi-arts festival reflects upon the nature of 'home' under the leadership of its 2016 guest director, artist and musician Laurie Anderson. The classical offerings are as strong as usual, with Daniel Harding conducting Leif Ove Andsnes and the LSO in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 20, and also Symphony No 3. In addition, La Nuova Musica performs Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Edward Gardner conducts the CBSO and Brighton Festival Chorus in Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. brightonfestival.org

Buckingham Summer Festival
July 2-9

Set in the market town of Buckingham, this festival offers morning piano recitals, and lunchtime and evening concerts. Of note is a concert performance of Mozart's one-act comic opera *Bastien und Bastienne*, while the closing gala concert includes Elgar's Cello Concerto and Sibelius's Symphony No 2. buckinghamsummerfestival.org

Bury St Edmunds Festival
May 20-29

Don't miss the chance to catch Aurora Orchestra in a memorised performance of Beethoven's Symphony No 5! Other highlights include The Marian Consort teaming up with actor Finbar Lynch to mark the 450th anniversary of Carlo Gesualdo's birth, and the Armonico Consort exploring, with wine critic Oz Clarke, the (tenuous!) links between Baroque music and wine. Nigel Kennedy and The Sixteen also perform. buryfestival.co.uk

Buxton Festival
July 8-24

The Peak District festival offers a wealth of opera, music and literature. A highlight is the UK premiere of Peter Eötvös's new

opera, *The Golden Dragon*, set in a pan-Asian restaurant and performed by Music Theatre Wales. Other productions at Buxton Opera House include Beethoven's *Leonore*, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Handel's *Tamerlano* and Vivaldi's *La Senna festeggiante*. Pianists Angela Hewitt and Stephen Kovacevich also make an appearance, as does The English Concert and Laurence Cummings. buxtonfestival.co.uk

Cambridge Summer Music Festival
July 15-30

The festival has undergone a major makeover this year under the new directorship of John McMunn. Among the highlights are the Schubert Ensemble performing a world premiere by Cambridge composer Jeremy Thurlow; and a programme to include Elgar and Wesley in Ely Cathedral as the festival acts as partner for the relaunch of Gabrieli Roar, in which young singers collaborate with the musicians of the Gabrieli Consort and Players. Elsewhere, Gallicantus mix old and new in a late-night recital partnering Lassus's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* with the UK premieres of works from Princeton composers Dmitri Tymoczko and Dan Trueman. Up-and-coming young soloists include guitarist Sean Shibe and soprano Louise Alder, and there are five children's concerts from artists including Aurora Orchestra and the Leonore Piano Trio. The festival is also piloting a late-night cabaret recital strand. cambridgesummermusic.com

Carducci Festival at Highnam
May 13-15

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the festival kicks off with the premiere of Simon Rowland-Jones's *Pianto antico* performed by the Carducci Quartet and tenor

Joshua Ellicott. Other artists include pianist Martin Roscoe, clarinettist Julian Bliss and oboist Nicholas Daniel. carduccifestivalhighnam.co.uk

Cheltenham Music Festival
July 6-17

The 150th anniversary of Erik Satie's birth is marked with a focus on his legacy as a trail-blazer. Nine events, featuring works by more than 20 composers including Cage and Michel van der Aa, celebrate Satie-inspired keyboard inventions such as early synthesisers and radiophonic toy pianos. The series culminates in an all-night performance of Satie's *Vexations*. If Satie isn't your bag, however, then there's plenty more on offer: mandolin player Avi Avital playing a Baroque Extravaganza with Bjarte Eike and Barokksolistene; Ex Cathedra at Tewkesbury Abbey; and Guy Johnston in the premiere of the completed Howells Cello Concerto. cheltenhamfestivals.com/music

Chichester Festival
June 18 - July 17

Now in its fourth year, this festival has grown to be one of the largest in the south, with more than 200 events held within a month. Musical highlights include the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra performing Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5 at Chichester Cathedral, and a three-day lunchtime series at St John's Chapel presented by early-music ensemble The Hanover Band. festivalofchichester.co.uk

Chipping Campden Music Festival
May 8-21

This year's two-week event at St James's Church is as top-class as ever. Highlights include an evening of Bach with violinist Isabelle Faust and harpsichordist Kristian Bezuidenhout, and harpsichordist Trevor Pinnock making his festival debut performing Purcell, Corelli and Handel, alongside violinists Sophie Gent and Matthew Truscott, and viola da gamba player Jonathan Manson. Also making her festival debut is mezzo Angelika Kirschlager, appearing in recital with festival regular Julius Drake. Other returning artists include pianists Paul Lewis (the festival's president) and Alfred Brendel, and the Festival Academy Orchestra. campdenmusicfestival.co.uk

City of London Festival
June 20 - July 8

Music, dance, debate and street performance combine in this annual celebration of London's City district. Highlights this year include a classical programme exploring centuries of music in intimate

surroundings, and a jazz programme in partnership with Jazz FM using a variety of venues not normally associated with live performance, such as the Masonic Temple hidden in the Andaz Hotel, Liverpool Street. The Shakespeare anniversary is also marked, while amateur music-making is celebrated with Office Choir Day. colf.org

The Cumnock Tryst
September 29 - October 2

Now in its third year, Sir James MacMillan's festival takes place at venues across the East Ayrshire town of Cumnock, and at Dumfries House. There's a continuing focus on choral and brass music interspersed with chamber works. Highlights include the premiere of a work by a young local composer, underlining MacMillan's commitment to nurturing local talent. The Sixteen's Eamonn Dougan returns to conduct the Tryst Festival Chorus. Alongside the main programme, the late-night Festival Club at the Dumfries Arms offers a range of music performed in a more relaxed setting. thecumnocktryst.com

Dartington International Summer School and Festival
July 30 - August 27

Set on the medieval Dartington estate in the heart of the Devon countryside, this festival runs a multi-arts events programme that features more than 80 evening concerts alongside a packed educational programme. It enjoyed a 200 per cent increase in concert ticket sales when pianist Joanna MacGregor took over the directorship last year, and the 2016 programme has a frankly dizzying array of musical offerings. Week one includes a Dowland project directed by Emma Kirkby and David Miller; a Homer-inspired course with jazz pianist Huw Warren, composer and hurdy-gurdy player Stevie Wishart and poet Alice Oswald; and Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* directed by Andrew Griffiths of Stile Antico. Other 2016 tutors, lecturers and performers include trumpeter Alison Balsom, composer Judith Weir, pianist Alfred Brendel, folk singer Kathryn Tickell, conductor Jane Glover, and the Škampa Quartet. This year also introduces Party in the Town, a new, free festival held all over Totnes on May 27, celebrating local musicians and artists. dartington.org

DEEP ∞ MINIMALISM
June 24-26

This is a brand-new weekend music festival from Southbank Centre and curated by cellist Oliver Coates, which celebrates music that takes its time and leaves

space for contemplation. Hosted by St John's, Smith Square, in London, the festival takes its name from the term 'deep listening', coined by American experimental composer Pauline Oliveros, and showcases composers, electronic pioneers and musicians at the forefront of this contemporary genre. Opening the festival is the world premiere of Daphne Oram's *Still Point* (1949) for two orchestras and electronics, with composer Shiva Feshareki on the turntables alongside the London Contemporary Orchestra. Other artists include violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, pianist Eliza Carthy and Quiet Music Ensemble. southbankcentre.co.uk/whatson/festivals-series/deep-minimalism

Dorset Opera Festival

July 26-30

Based at Bryanston School, this year's event features performances of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Verdi's *Macbeth*. dorsetopera.com

East Neuk Festival

June 22 - July 3

Romantic composers and remembrance are the themes of the five-based festival this year. Music of the Romantics weaves prominently through the core chamber-music programme, and the centenary of the Battle of the Somme is marked with a specially commissioned work from Oscar-nominated US composer David Lang. On a lighter note, the festival opens with a jazz and world-music weekend. There are festival debuts from pianist Joseph Moog and cellist Julian Steckel, and returning artists include the Pavel Haas Quartet and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. eastneukfestival.com

Edinburgh International Festival

August 5-29

A highlight for 2016 is Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier's 2013 production of Bellini's *Norma*, with Cecilia Bartoli heading up a cast that includes Rebeca Olvera, John Osborn, Peter Kálmán, Liliana Nikiteanu and Reinaldo Macias. Another is the closing concert at Usher Hall, when Donald Runnicles conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Edinburgh Festival Chorus in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. This is his last concert as the orchestra's chief conductor. elf.co.uk

English Haydn Festival

June 8-12

Embracing the theme 'Haydn's Life in Vienna', the 2016 English Haydn Festival focuses on the years leading up to the composer's death in 1809 and his friendships with

Beethoven, Schubert and Mozart. Among the artists performing are the Fitzwilliam, Chiaroscuro and Salomon String Quartets, violinist Simon Standage and conductor Anthony Halstead. englishhaydn.com

English Music Festival

May 27-30

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the festival opens with a concert at Dorchester Abbey with Martin Yates conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra in a programme featuring three world premieres: works by Paul Lewis and David Matthews, and Martin Yates's realisation of *Fat Knight* - Vaughan Williams's previously unperformed seven-movement suite from his opera *Sir John in Love*. Chamber recitals include cellist Richard Jenkinson and pianist Benjamin Frith performing works by Ian Venables, Gurney and others. englishmusicfestival.org.uk

Fishguard International Music Festival

July 22 - August 2

This Welsh festival is held at venues in Fishguard, the neighbouring town of Goodwick and across north Pembrokeshire. St Davids Cathedral hosts the opening and closing concerts, the former given by the Welsh National Opera Orchestra, the latter by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Clarinettist Michael Collins gives a recital with the festival's joint artistic director Peter Donohoe. Collins and his ensemble London Winds also play the premiere of a new work for wind quintet and piano by Welsh composer John Metcalf, 70 this year. fishguardmusicfestival.co.uk

Garsington Opera

June 3 - July 17

Based at the Wormsley Estate in the Chiltern Hills, Garsington offers a particularly stellar line-up this year. Baritone Roderick Williams makes both a festival and title-role debut in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, while tenor Toby Spence does the same in Mozart's *Idomeneo*. There's also Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri*, while Haydn's *The Creation* is set to dance by contemporary dance company Rambert, and features soprano Sarah Tynan, tenor James Gilchrist and bass Neal Davies. garsingtonopera.org

Grange Park Opera

June 2 - July 16

This Hampshire festival set in semi-derelict stately home The Grange, Northampton, has been giving opera-goers a quirky chic alternative to Glyndebourne since 1997. However, next year it's moving to West Horsley Place,

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Glyndebourne

May 21 - August 28

The 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare is marked most notably with the fully staged Glyndebourne debut of Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*, in a new production directed by Laurent Pelly



The Cunning Little Vixen is revived at Glyndebourne

and conducted by Robin Ticciati. David Hall's 1982 production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* returns, conducted by Kazuski Ono. The other new production this year is Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, directed by Annabel Arden and conducted by Enrique Mazzola, with Danielle de Niese as Rosina. Other revivals are *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. Among the 2016 tour offerings is Glyndebourne's first-ever production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, directed by Danish National Opera's Annilese Miskimmon. glyndebourne.com

Surrey, so this is your last chance to experience it in its original home. The 2016 festival, dubbed Swansong, opens with Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* before continuing with Stephen Medcalf's 2008 spaghetti western production of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*. Verdi's *Don Carlo* follows, starring Milanese tenor Stefano Secco. Last comes the aptly chosen *Tristan und Isolde*, in a concert performance with soprano Anja Kampe, US tenor Bryan Register and Clive Bayley. grangeparkopera.co.uk

Gregynog Festival

June 16-26

'Eire' is the theme of Wales's oldest extant music festival this year, with the cultural connections between Wales and Ireland explored in myriad events across Pennant Melangell, Aberystwyth, Montgomery and Llandinam - and at country mansion Gregynog itself. Artists include viol player Jordi Savall, harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, soprano Ailish Tynan, the Irish Consort with harpist Siobhán Armstrong, fiddler Aoife Ní Bhriain, the Academy of Ancient Music, and the Fidelio Trio. Poetry, drama, film, talks and exhibitions sit alongside both classical and traditional music. gregynogfestival.org

Henley Festival

July 6-10

Set on the banks of the River Thames, and even on the Thames itself thanks to the floating stage, this festival combines a multi-genre music programme with good food (this year provided by Daniel Clifford), fireworks, and non-musical arts such as comedy. Bryn Terfel and the Welsh National Opera Orchestra are the classical stars. There are jazz musicians from

Ronnie Scott's, while Elton John and his band open the festival. henley-festival.co.uk

Holt Festival

July 23-31

This North Norfolk Georgian town's festival hosts a mixture of music, literary, drama, visual arts and family events. Classical highlights for 2016 include a recital from British violin duo Retorica (Harriet Mackenzie and Philippa Mo). holtfestival.org

International Musicians Platform

August 5-14

Taking place at various venues across Dumfries and Galloway, the festival offers concerts alongside masterclasses with some of the performing artists. Topping the bill is soprano Danielle de Niese. Also appearing are pianists Sasha Grynkuk, John Lenehan, Simon Lepper, John Thwaites and Anna Fedorova, cellist Karine Georgian and tenor Nicky Spence. absoluteclassics.co.uk

King's Lynn Festival

July 17-30

Classical music sits alongside folk, talks and arts events in the festival's 66th year. The Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra opens with a movie-themed programme, while the final concert sees the Czech National Symphony Orchestra under Libor Pešek perform Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with soloist Alexander Sitkovetsky. Other artists include Emma Johnson, Angela Hewitt, Catrin Finch and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the coffee concerts include the Fidelio Trio, the Eeden Quartet and pianist Yuanfan Yang. kingslynnfestival.org.uk

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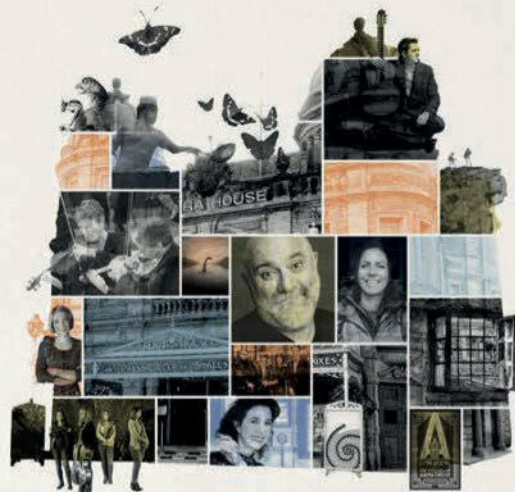
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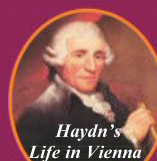
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The Hallé with Elena Urioste (violin)
English Touring Opera *Don Giovanni*
The Sixteen - The Choral Pilgrimage
Pascal and Ami Rogé
The Aquarelle Guitar Quartet
Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra
KT Tunstall
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The John Wilson Orchestra



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Yoko Kaneko - fortepiano
Simon Standage - violin
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Kings Place Festival

September 9-11

Set on the canal next to London's King's Cross, the concert halls, art galleries and atriums of Kings Place make for a near-perfect festival setting. Highlights include the Artea Trio, featuring Aurora Orchestra principal Thomas Gould, performing Sitkovetsky's string trio arrangement of the *Goldberg Variations*. In addition, there's a performance by Cellophony, and Kings Place artistic associate the Brodsky Quartet performs Shostakovich, Mendelssohn and Beethoven. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment also returns. Non-classical acts include folk star Eliza Carthy.

kingsplace.co.uk

Lake District Summer Music International Festival

July 30 - August 12

With more than 40 events across 15 venues throughout the South Lakes, the line-up looks great this year. The First World War centenary is marked with works by Bartók and Szymanowski, while another highlight is the 1929 silent-film rarity *New Babylon*, with its original Shostakovich piano score played by Sasha Grynyuk. Other artists include Tabea Debus (recorder), the A4 Brass, Škampa and Chilingirian Quartets, and BBC New Generation Artist Alec Frank-Gemmill (horn).

ldsm.org.uk

Lammermuir Festival

September 9-18

This East Lothian festival takes place in a variety of venues, including the concorde hangar at the National Museum of Flight. Artist-in-residence for 2016 is pianist Roman Rabinovich, whose concerts include a daily Haydn piano sonata as part of the new weekday Coffee Concerts strand. The Dunedin Consort and John Butt open with Monteverdi's *Vespers*, while the Royal Northern Sinfonia under Lars Vogt close with Mahler's Symphony No 4. Other performers include festival patron Steven Osborne (piano), The Marian Consort, tenor James Gilchrist, organist William Whitehead and the Hebrides Ensemble.

lammermuirfestival.co.uk

Leicester International Music Festival

September 15-17

Focusing largely on English music this year, the concerts take place in the Victorian gallery of New Walk Museum. Artists include violinists Marina Chiche and Giovanni Guzzo, Philip Dukes (viola), Guy Johnston (cello), Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Charles Owen (piano) and the Carducci Quartet.

musicfestival.co.uk

Lichfield Festival

July 1-10

2016 is the 35th anniversary of this multi-arts event, and a major theme is the centenary of the Battle of the Somme (the opening night coincides with the actual 100-year date), examined within the context of that era also being the heyday of music hall and cabaret. Deborah Pritchard is composer-in-residence, in partnership with Sound and Music's 'Embedded' programme. There is another specially commissioned opera production.

lichfieldfestival.org

London Festival of Baroque Music

May 13-19

This year's festival celebrates the combined power of music and language. Concerts take place at St John's, Smith Square, St Peter's Eaton Square, and Westminster Abbey. Highlights served up by artistic director Lindsay Kemp include Handel's *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt*, a new staging of Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, Italian and English song recitals by Roberta Invernizzi and Iestyn Davies, a harpsichord recital specially devised by Mahan Esfahani, and a 'Late o'Clock Baroque' concert with singer-songwriter Olivia Chaney.

lfbm.org.uk

Longborough Festival Opera

June 9 - August 4

This country-house festival has a special commitment to Wagner's music. It also has an especially intimate feel, thanks to its 500-seat auditorium. 2016's Wagner offering sees music director Anthony Negus conduct a new production of *Tannhäuser* directed by Alan Privett, in which John Treleaven and Neal Cooper share the title-role. The other operas are Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Janáček's *Jenůfa* and Handel's *Alcina*.

lfo.org.uk

Malcolm Arnold Festival

October 15-16

Based at Northampton's Royal and Derngate performing arts centre, highlights include the BBC Concert Orchestra performing Arnold's Guitar Concerto with Craig Ogden.

malcolmarnoldfestival.com

Mendelssohn on Mull Festival

July 4-9

The idea behind this Scottish chamber-music festival is to bring new-generation musicians into contact with professional mentors including artistic director Levon Chilingirian, other members of the Chilingirian Quartet, and Marcia Crayford. They workshop music, then perform it in a series of free concerts at various venues on Mull

and Iona, and in Oban. This year's highlight is a concert in Iona Abbey in which the combined ensembles perform *Coventry*, a meditation for strings by Czech composer Vilem Tausky, who was among the first soldiers posted to the city after the blitz of November 1940.

mendelssohnonmull.com

Milton Abbey International Music Festival

July 25-30

Hosted by vocal group Voces8, the festival takes place in Dorset's 12th-century Milton Abbey and runs in tandem with a summer school open to all. Highlights include a semi-staged *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell, starring Mary Bevan with Voces8 and the Voces8 Scholars, and directed by Patrick Ayrton with French period ensemble Les Inventions. There's also a performance of Mozart's Requiem, with Voces8 and the Festival Chorus conducted by artistic director Barnaby Smith.

miltonabbeyfestival.com

Music at Paxton

July 15-24

This chamber-music festival in the intimate surroundings of the picture gallery at Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, has a new feature this year: a weekend residency with pianist Cédric Tiberghien and violinist Alina Ibragimova, who join forces with cellist Pieter Wispelwey for a Beethoven programme on the opening night. Other artists include the Scottish Chamber Orchestra winds and the Van Kuijk Quartet, winners of the 2015 Wigmore Hall string quartet competition.

musicatpaxton.co.uk

Music in the Round - May Festival

May 6-14

This year, Sheffield's festival of chamber music celebrates Beethoven. Highlights include resident musicians Ensemble 360 being joined by new singer-in-residence Roderick Williams for Howard Skempton's new retelling of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and jazz pianist Julian Joseph performing his own jazz-influenced version of Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, Op 132. Other guest artists include the Avison Ensemble performing Baroque repertoire, and Norway's Vertavo Quartet.

musicintheround.co.uk

Newbury Spring Festival

May 7-21

Venues in Newbury and the surrounding countryside include Highclere Castle, Coombe Manor, Long Gallery at Englefield House, Douai Abbey and East Woodhay

Church. These atmospheric settings are this year hosting an impressive array of concerts including the CBO, the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, Benjamin Grosvenor, Pinchas Zukerman, Christopher Maltman and the Vienna Piano Trio. Young artists are also given a platform thanks to a special lunchtime-recital series.

newburyspringfestival.org.uk

Norfolk and Norwich Festival

May 13-29

This multi-arts festival is probably the oldest in the UK, tracing its history back to 1772. This year's classical artists include I Fagiolini, the Max Richter Ensemble, and the Norwich Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra performing Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*.

A commission from Kemal Yusuf also receives its world premiere.

nnfestival.org.uk

North Norfolk Music Festival

August 15-27

Highlights include tenor Joshua Ellicott and pianist Simon Lepper performing a programme of songs and letters from a First World War soldier, 100 years to the day since he was killed in action on the Somme. One artist making his NNMF debut is pianist Alexander Melnikov, who gives a solo recital and also joins the Doric Quartet for Brahms's Piano Quintet; plus, alumni from the Yehudi Menuhin School, including pianist Melvyn Tan, play at a concert to mark the centenary of Menuhin's birth.

northnorfolkmusicfestival.com

North York Moors Chamber Music Festival

August 14-27

Cellist Jamie Walton is the founder and artistic director of this festival which operates under a slightly unusual system whereby a pool of musicians interchange for each work. In effect, this puts the focus on the music and not necessarily who is playing it, although the musicians are all international artists. As the festival moves into its eighth year, launching its own record label Ayriel Classical as it does so, the theme is 'Schumann: A Genius Revealed'. Concerts celebrate and explore Schumann's complexity, both musically and in terms of his temperament.

northyorkmoorsfestival.com

Opera Holland Park

June 7 - August 13

A new production from Olivia Fuchs of Mascagni's rarely performed *Iris* opens the season this year, with Stuart Stratford conducting the City of London Sinfonia and a cast including Anne Sophie Duprels in the title-role. The other productions this year, all of which are new, are

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Iford Arts

June 4 - August 6

Proof that the West Country can do country-house opera too, this festival is set in the Grade I-listed Peto Garden of Iford Manor, six miles outside Bath. Opera is staged in the round and sung in English for a seated audience of 90. There are also informal promenade concerts as well as seated cloister



Iford Manor's Peto Garden provides a magical setting

concerts. This year, the festival celebrates Shakespeare's anniversary with a new production of Verdi's *Macbeth*, conducted by musical director Oliver Gooch. Also of note is Christian Curnyn conducting his Early Opera Company orchestra in a new performing version of Purcell's *A Fairy Queen*. ifordarts.org.uk

Puccini's *La bohème*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* and Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Parents will be pleased to know that Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland* is back for a fourth year. operahollandpark.com

Oxford Lieder Festival

October 14-29

The 15th festival falls on the 160th anniversary of Robert Schumann's death - thus, it's been named the Schumann Project and looks very much as if it's following in the footsteps of the 2014 Schubert Project, which picked up an RPS Award. In an exploration of Schumann's life and times, the composer's vocal repertoire, alongside songs by his friends and contemporaries, is placed alongside other Schumann works. Highlights include two lecture recitals from pianist Graham Johnson, a residential course led by baritone Wolfgang Holzmair, and an opening recital by baritone Christian Gerhaher accompanied by Gerold Huber. Other singers include Anne Sofie von Otter, Bo Skovhus, Sir Thomas Allen, Sarah Connolly and James Gilchrist. The 120th anniversary of Clara Schumann's death is marked with performances of all 29 of her songs. oxfordlieder.co.uk

Oxford May Festival

April 27 - May 2

This is a festival that combines music and science, under the artistic direction of violinist Jack Liebeck and administration of renowned particle physicist Professor Brian Foster. It's based mostly in the historic Holywell Music Room, and this year's emphasis is on female composers and darkness. Lecturers include

Jim Al-Khalili and Stephen Johnson, who returns to analyse music by female composers. Resident artists are the Goldner Quartet, Trio Dali and pianist Katya Apekisheva. Visiting artists include harpist Catrin Finch and viola player Gérard Caussé. oxfordmaymusic.co.uk

Oxford Piano Festival and Summer Academy

July 30 - August 7

This festival combines a concert series in some of the most beautiful and historic buildings in Oxford with a residential daily programme of public masterclasses and lectures. Highlights include Nikolai Lugansky making his festival debut with a recital at Merton College Chapel, and Marc-André Hamelin performing sonatas by Samuel Feinberg alongside Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata. Menahem Pressler plays Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23 with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra in addition to giving a masterclass, while other piano masterclasses are given by Peter Donohoe and Dame Fanny Waterman. oxfordphil.com

Perth Festival of the Arts

May 19-29

This is one of the oldest continuously running arts festivals in Scotland. Its concerts take place in Perth Concert Hall and the historic St John's Kirk, which dates back to the 15th century. It opens with a new production of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* from English Touring Opera, directed by Michael Rosewell. Other classical highlights include Harry Christophers and The Sixteen performing William Byrd and Arvo Pärt on their 16th annual pilgrimage, and the Hallé under Jamie Phillips giving

the closing concert featuring Beethoven's Symphony No 5. perthfestival.co.uk

Plush Festival, Dorset

July 15 - September 10

Classical, contemporary and jazz music intermingle in the magical venue of St John the Baptist Church, Plush. Resident composer Oliver Knussen features over the August bank holiday, with concerts including works by Schumann, Brahms and Mozart alongside contemporary pieces, talks, open rehearsals, a film screening and a cabaret show starring cellist Zoë Martlew. Other artists include pianists Pavel Kolesnikov and Samson Tsoy (both BBC New Generation Artists), violinist Thomas Gould, the Doric Quartet, and pianist Joanna MacGregor. plushfestival.com

Portsmouth Festivities

June 17-26

Many of this year's events have an 'electric' theme, such as a screening of the silent film *Nosferatu* with live organ-playing from Jonathan Eyre. Making their festival debuts are the London Contemporary Orchestra, the chapel choir of Merton College, Oxford, and sub-organist of Westminster Abbey Daniel Cook. Favourite strands return, too, such as the Battle of the Organs, and the Portsmouth Music Festival Masterclass, led by violinist Levon Chilingirian. The cathedral also hosts a 'Come and Sing' event featuring Will Todd's choral epic, *Jazz Mass*. portsmouthfestivities.co.uk

Presteigne Festival

August 25-30

This intimate Powys/Herefordshire-border festival is this year using the centenary of the Battle of the Somme to examine war and its influence on composers and their music, a highlight being composer-in-residence Robert Saxton's new work *The Resurrection of the Soldiers*. Nova Music is back, this time with a staged performance of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* in its original version for narrator, actors and ensemble, while other visiting artists include pianists Huw Watkins and Clare Hammond, and cellist Alice Neary. presteignefestival.com

Principal Sound Festival

April 1-4

This mini festival centred around the music of American composer Morton Feldman contains all sorts of interesting rarities, not least Feldman's *For Philip Guston* (1984) for flute, piano and percussion. Also worth noting are premieres of works by Jürg Frey, who was the featured composer at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

last year, and Christian Mason, who won the 2015 Ernst von Siemens composition prize. sjss.org.uk

Proms at St Jude's

June 25 - July 3

The church of St Jude-on-the-Hill in north London's Hampstead Garden Suburb is the venue for this ambitious festival. Nevill Holt Opera returns for another year with Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, conducted by Nicholas Chalmers. Other highlights include pianist Benjamin Grosvenor and violinist Hyeyoon Park together in recital, pianist Martin Roscoe, and The Tallis Scholars singing a world premiere by young London composer Alexander Campkin. *Horrible Histories* author Terry Deary is also involved, narrating a children's concert (featuring Eboracum Baroque) based on his book. promsatstjudes.org.uk

Ryedale Festival

July 15-31

This North Yorkshire festival brings established and emerging artists to perform in spectacular and historic venues across Ryedale such as Castle Howard, Sledmere House and Ampleforth Abbey. This year boasts two performances of a new production of Handel's *Alcina*, in a new English translation by John Warrack. Among several artists-in-residence are the Heath Quartet and the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Further highlights include baritone Roderick Williams and pianist Christopher Glynn performing the world premiere of a new English version of Schubert's *Winterreise* by Jeremy Sams. ryedalefestival.com

Sherborne Abbey Festival

April 29 - May 3

With 70 per cent of performances offering free entry, this is one of Dorset's most accessible music festivals. Visiting artists this year include flautist Sir James Galway, Voces8 and Stile Antico. The 10th anniversary of the festival's own choir is marked with an all-English programme of Vaughan Williams and Howells. sherborneabbeyfestival.org

Sound Festival

October 20 - November 6

This year's festival, held at various venues in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, includes a weekend of events focusing on contemporary writing for string quartet. Another highlight is a festival co-commission from Sir Peter Maxwell Davies performed by pianist Rolf Hind, and the festival's associate ensemble Red Note performing Louis Andriessen's *De Staat* alongside a newly commissioned work by David Fennessy.

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Image: the Danube at Grein,
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sound-scotland.co.uk

Southern Cathedrals Festival July 21-23

It's the turn of Chichester Cathedral to host this year. More details will be announced nearer the time.
southerncathedralsfestival.org.uk

Spitalfields Music Summer Festival June 2-26

The east London festival turns 40 this year. The early music for which it has become known is unsurprisingly a clear focus of the 2016 festival – don't miss a Vivaldi strand featuring The English Concert and Scottish Ensemble. There's plenty of new music too, including premieres from composers Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Anna Meredith and James Redwood. Among other highlights are a dramatic reimagining of Purcell's *King Arthur* from Club Inégales; and *Depart*, a joint production from Spitalfields Music, LIFT and the National Centre for Circus Arts taking place in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and featuring Australian contemporary circus company Circa.
spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk

St Andrews Voices October 20-23

Established five years ago, this is Scotland's only festival dedicated to vocal and choral music. Its mission is to celebrate the voice in all its many guises – including opera, Lieder, choral music, folk, cabaret, jazz and a *cappella*. I Fagiolini is 2016's performer-in-residence; other national talent includes St Salvator's Chapel Choir (University of St Andrews). Concerts take place in many venues across the town.
standrewsvoices.com

St Endellion Summer Festival July 26 – August 5

This is the only Cornish festival in *Gramophone's* guide and, under the artistic directorship of Mark Padmore, it's a top-quality affair. Highlights include Walton's Cello Concerto with soloist Tim Gill, and Handel's *Dixit dominus*, conducted by Martyn Brabbins and Aidan Oliver. In addition, Ryan Wigglesworth conducts *Our Hunting Fathers*, and Brabbins conducts *Gloriana* (both by Britten) with Susan Bullock in the title-role. These concerts are held at the picturesque St Endellion Church, but Truro Cathedral hosts a performance of Berlioz's *L'enfance du Christ*, also conducted by Brabbins, with Padmore, Marcus Farnsworth and Frances Bourne among the soloists.
endellionfestivals.org.uk

St Magnus International Festival June 16-26

The festival celebrates its 40th anniversary this year with 40 music premieres, 40 new poems and 40 artworks. Highlights include Florilegium and Voces8 performing Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at St Magnus Cathedral, and Simon Trpčeski performing Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Alexander Vedernikov at Kirkwall's Pickaquooy Arena. Also performing is the Danish Sinfonietta, conducted by David Riddell.
stmagnusfestival.com

Swaledale Festival May 28 – June 11

This Yorkshire festival combines top-class musical acts with a very local flavour thanks to brass bands, guided walks in the Dales and the annual Reeth Lecture, which is given this year by Andrew Graham-Dixon. Visiting classical artists for 2016 include the Hallé, pianists Benjamin Grosvenor and Richard Uttley, the Fitzwilliam and Heath String Quartets, Florin Ensemble, violinist Adam Summerhayes, 21st Century Baroque, Stile Antico and Emma Kirkby with Jacob Heringman and Susanna Pell.
swalefest.org

Three Choirs Festival July 23-30

The historic festival comes to Gloucester this year where, for the first time, a festival village is set up around the cathedral offering food, drink and entertainment from local musicians. As the festival enters its fourth century it focuses on youth; young artists such as Santtu-Matias Rouvali – the 29-year-old chief conductor of the Finnish Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra – join the Three Choirs Festival Chorus, the Choirs of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester Cathedrals and the Philharmonia Orchestra. In addition to Rouvali, other visiting conductors include Edward Gardner and Simon Halsey, while Sir Willard White makes his festival debut in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.
3choirs.org

Tilford Bach Festival June 10-12

Tilford Church in Surrey is the venue for this weekend festival under the music directorship of violinist and conductor Adrian Butterfield. A highlight is the Sunday evening performance of Bach's B minor Mass, in which Adrian Butterfield conducts the London Handel Orchestra and the Pegasus Choir, joined by soprano Julia Doyle, alto Renata Pokupić, tenor Charles Daniels and bass Stephan Loges.

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

York Early Music Festival July 8-16

YEMF marks the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare with 'Fairies, Witches and Aerial Beings' – a festival full of music from the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres, along with pieces inspired by the Shakespearean themes of magic, mystery and the supernatural. Highlights include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, joined by Elizabeth Kenny as music director and Caroline Williams as stage director, for a Restoration-audience-friendly 'dramatick opera' version of *The Tempest*. Among the guest artists are Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, lutenist Thomas Dunford (joined for the first time in the UK by percussionist Keyvan Chemirani), and the Barokksolistene making their York debut.
ncem.co.uk/yemf



Perfect venue: the nave of York Minster

This performance is repeated at St John's, Smith Square, London, on June 13.
tilbach.org.uk

The Two Moors Festival October 22-29

Chamber music, early music, Lieder recitals and an orchestral concert from world-class artists all take place in atmospheric venues across Dartmoor and Exmoor national parks. Further details will be announced later in the year.
thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk

Ulverston International Music Festival June 8-19

English Touring Opera returns to the Cumbrian festival this year, its cast and 25-piece orchestra performing Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at Coronation Hall. Other highlights are violinist Jennifer Pike in recital with the festival's director, pianist Anthony Hewitt; a Swarthmoor Hall concert from the Navarra Quartet; the Royal Northern Sinfonia with a programme of symphonic masterpieces from the Romantic era; and a Rising Star recital from pianist Alexander Panfilov in Ulverston Parish Church.
ulverstonmusicfestival.co.uk

Vale of Glamorgan Festival May 10-20

2016 sees this festival – notable for celebrating the work of living composers – marking three landmark composer birthdays: the 70th of Péteris Vasks and John Metcalf, and the 80th of Steve Reich. One highlight is the world premiere of Vasks's new viola concerto written for Maxim Rysanov, who performs it with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. This is the first of three major new festival commissions (2016-18) scored for symphony orchestra by major international composers. Three more

world premieres take place over the course of the festival, along with eight UK premieres. Other visiting artists include the Latvian Radio Choir, the Tana Quartet from Belgium and Denmark's Ensemble MidtVest.
valeofglamorganfestival.org.uk

Wales Harp Festival

April 6-7
Based at Galeri, Caernarfon's arts centre, this is a two-day event with concerts and a course for harpists of all ages and abilities. This year celebrates the bicentenary of the birth of John Roberts (1816-94), 'Harpist of Wales', and a highlight is a Wales- and Ireland-themed concert from Robin Huw Bowen, Ben Creighton-Griffiths, and Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Chris Newman.
walesharpfestival.co.uk

Wales International Piano Festival

April 29 – May 2
Again based at the Galeri arts centre, this year's festival has a new director – pianist Iwan Llewelyn-Jones. With concerts, competitions, masterclasses and workshops on offer, highlights for 2016 include a recital from Peter Donohoe and six world premieres of new solo piano works.
pianofestival.co.uk

West Meon Music Festival September 16-18

Set in the Hampshire village of West Meon, this festival sees the Primrose Piano Quartet presenting a varied programme of old favourites and lesser-known works. This year is focused on a general theme of dance, and highlights include the world premiere of a new arrangement for piano quartet of Ravel's *La valse*, and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet with guest artist Michael Collins.
westmeonmusic.co.uk

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EUROPE FESTIVALS

Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival France

March 22 – April 3

Established by violinist Renaud Capuçon and the director of the Grand Théâtre de Provence, Dominique Bluzet, this Provence festival is now in its fourth year and growing ever stronger. A mix of concerts in the Grand Théâtre, public masterclasses and street performances, this year features seven orchestras and conductors including the Budapest Festival Orchestra with Iván Fischer, Camerata Salzburg with Louis Langrée and Musica Saeculorum with Philipp von Steinaecker. Soloists include violinists Daniel Hope, Isabelle Faust and Maxim Vengerov along with Renaud Capuçon himself, cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Gautier Capuçon, pianists Hélène Grimaud and François-Frédéric Guy, and baritone Thomas Hampson.

festivalpaques.com/en/

Aix-en-Provence Festival France

June 30 – July 20

New festival productions this year are Mozart's *Così fan tutte* directed by the French film-maker Christophe Honoré and conducted by Louis Langrée with the resident Freiburg Baroque Orchestra; Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* led by Esa-Pekka Salonen with the Philharmonia Orchestra; and completing the Festival's Handel cycle, *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno* conducted by Handel specialist Emmanuelle Haim with Le Concert d'Astrée. There are also two world premiere operas:

Ondřej Adámek's *Seven Stones from the Tower of Babel* and Moneim Adwan's *Kalila wa Dimna*. The festival's Stravinsky cycle continues with Peter Sellars directing *Oedipus rex* coupled with *Symphony of Psalms*, in addition to orchestral works including *The Rite of Spring* and music to the ballet *Agon* choreographed by Karole Armitage. All are led by Salonen with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

festival-aix.com

Chorégies d'Orange France

July 9 – August 6

With performances staged in the 8300-seat ancient Roman Théâtre Antique d'Orange near Avignon, this opera festival has a particularly awe-inspiring backdrop. This year's operas are Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Verdi's *La traviata*. There are some noteworthy concerts too, such as a Verdi Requiem, and Paul Daniel making his festival debut conducting operatic arias and overtures with the Orchestre National Bordeaux-Aquitaine and soloists soprano Sonya Yoncheva and tenor Saimir Pirgu. There's also a Bernstein and Gershwin concert with the Marseille Philharmonic Orchestra and soprano Julie Fuchs, tenor Benjamin Bernheim and pianist Nicholas Angelich.

choregies.fr

Dresden Music Festival Germany

May 5 – June 5

Under the artistic direction of cellist Jan Vogler, the festival's theme this year is 'time', with its various facets

explored in some 52 concerts featuring artists such as violinists Leonidas Kavakos and Arabella Steinbacher, and pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard. Israel is also a central focus this year: the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under its conductor Omer Meir Wellber is orchestra-in-residence, and the Jerusalem Quartet performs an all-Shostakovich programme including String Quartet No 8, which was written near Dresden in 1960 – the composer having surveyed the bombed-out city. The international character of the festival is underlined by appearances from the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Andris Nelsons, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under Semyon Bychkov and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck.

musikfestspiele.com

Festival International de Piano de La Roque d'Anthéron France

July 22 – August 17

Classical, contemporary, jazz and even electronic music centred around the piano are what to expect from this major French piano festival, with its impressive main concert space in the grounds of the Château de Florans. Pianists this year include Nikolai Lugansky, Nicholas Angelich, Grigory Sokolov and Anne Queffélec. Harpsichordists include Pierre Hantaï and Bertrand Cuiller; orchestras include the Sinfonia Varsovi; and there is chamber music from Trio Wanderer and the Modigliani Quartet.

festival-piano.com

Baltic Sea Festival Sweden

August 28 – September 4

This Stockholm festival pays special attention to music from the Baltic Sea region, and also to encouraging new-generation musicians. This year there are 10 concerts in three venues. Among the symphony orchestras, ensembles, choirs and prominent soloists taking part from all over the Baltic Sea area are the Swedish Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra and conductors Valery Gergiev and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

balticseafestival.com

Beethovenfest Bonn Germany

September 9 – October 9

There's a Napoleonic theme this year, and one of the highlights will surely be François-Xavier Roth conducting Etienne-Nicolas Méhul's rarely performed *Messe solennelle pour le sacre de Napoléon* as well as another concert featuring Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra under Teodor Currentzis also brings a Napoleonic programme, including Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*. In addition, Kirill Petrenko appears this year, conducting the Bavarian State Orchestra in Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, and Bartók's Violin Concerto No 1 with soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann.

en.beethovenfest.de

Bergen International Festival Norway

May 25 – June 8

Set in one of the oldest cities in Norway, against a dramatic fjord-filled backdrop, this festival showcases the best of Norwegian arts and the wider northern European scene. A highlight of this year's classical offerings is newly staged productions by British video artist Netia Jones of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and *Verklärte Nacht*, with soprano Nadja Michael and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra under Baldur Brönniman. Violinist Janine Jansen and pianist Leif Ove Andsnes perform a chamber recital together with young artists from the festival's Crescendo programme, for whom they have been acting as mentors. The closing concert stars pianist Benjamin Grosvenor and trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger with the Bergen Philharmonic under Kazuki Yamada.

fib.no

Berliner Klavier Festival Germany

May 17 – June 2

Founded in 2012, the festival's aim is twofold. First, to present some of the world's greatest pianists who for whatever reason aren't part of the Berlin scene or big-label PR machinery; and second, to offer recitals in a more intimate environment. Concerts take place in the small hall of Berlin's Konzerthaus, which seats just under 400 and has an excellent acoustic. This year's recitals are from Nikolai Lugansky, Benjamin Grosvenor, Paul Lewis, Sophie Pacini and Nikolai Demidenko.

berliner-klavierfestival.de

Bregenz Festival Austria

July 20 – August 21

Celebrating its 70th birthday this year, the festival opens with the Austrian premiere of an operatic rarity, Franco Faccio's *Hamlet* (1865). The new production is directed by Olivier Tambosi, conducted by Paolo Carignani, and stars tenor Pavel Černoch in the title-role. Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Festival Berlioz August 19-30 France

Celebrating the music of Hector Berlioz, this French festival is held in and around the composer's birthplace town of La Côte Saint-André, near Grenoble in south-east France. The main concerts take place within the courtyard of the town's Château Louis XI. This year's theme is 'Les Fleurs du mal – Berlioz at the Witches' Ball' – inspired by French poet Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* poem cycle and focusing on the composer's more demonic music, notably the *Symphonie fantastique*. More than 60 symphony concerts, recitals and chamber music events are scheduled, embracing performances of rarely heard Berlioz cantatas and melodies. Highlights of the 12-day festival include Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir performing the *Roméo et Juliette* dramatic Symphony, and a concert version of the *Benvenuto Cellini* opera played by the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne conducted by François-Xavier Roth.

festivalberlioz.com



Gardiner conducts Shakespearean Berlioz

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was the festival's inaugural opera in 1946, and this year it is being restaged on the very same spot as the original production – on two gravel barges in the Gondelhafen marina. *Turandot* also returns to the lake stage, while young singers work on *Don Giovanni* in the Opera Studio.

bregenzerspiele.com

Festival de Musique de Menton France

July 30 – August 14

Established in 1950, this French Riviera festival is one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious, attracting big names each year. Musicians for 2016 include pianists Boris Berezovsky and Lars Vogt, and violinist Renaud Capuçon.

festival-musique-menton.fr

Ghent Festival of Flanders Belgium

September 17 – October 1

'Roots' is the theme, and artists performing in St Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent, include violinist Vadim Repin with the Beethoven Bonn Orchestra, rising cellist Harriet Krijgh, the Vienna Boys' Choir, and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra in a Bach programme with conductor Ton Koopman. Special festival events include OdeGand on the opening weekend – a one-day city-centre event with more than 60 classical and world-music concerts culminating in a big evening, open-air spectacle. There's also a new nightlife strand in which classical meets electronic.

gentfestival.be

Göttingen International Handel Festival Germany

May 5-16

Under the theme of 'connections', Handel's rarely performed operetta *Imeneo* is the production gracing the Deutsches Theater Göttingen stage this year, conducted by festival artistic director Laurence Cummings and directed by Sigrid T'Hooft. Opening night is devoted to the oratorio *Susanna*. The Göttingen Festival Orchestra celebrates its 10th birthday with a performance of Handel's *Water Music*; it's also doing an exchange with the Wrocław Baroque Orchestra, who perform *Messiah* at the festival before the festival orchestra reciprocates with a concert in Wrocław. Other visiting soloists include violinist Giuliano Carmignola, Musica Alta Ripa and Spark.

haendel-festspiele.de

Grafenegg Festival Austria

August 19 – September 11

Celebrating its 10th year under the artistic direction of Austria's pre-eminent pianist Rudolf Buchbinder, this 'Austrian Tanglewood' takes place in the grounds of Grafenegg Castle just

outside Vienna. It opens with Beethoven's Symphony No 9 played by the resident Tonkünstler Orchestra under the direction of its new conductor, Yutaka Sado. Guests include the Cleveland Orchestra under Franz Welser-Möst, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under Daniele Gatti, the Mariinsky Orchestra with Valery Gergiev, the Staatskapelle Dresden with conductor Christian Thielemann, violinist Nikolaj Znaider and cellist Sol Gabetta. The last day of the festival sees Buchbinder performing all five Beethoven piano concertos with the Vienna Philharmonic.

grafenegg.com

Gstaad Menuhin Festival and Academy Switzerland

July 14 – September 3

Yehudi Menuhin founded the Menuhin Festival in 1957, and these days it's a star-studded and many-stranded affair. There's the Chamber Music Festival; the 'festive' strand, which presents concerts and opera; and 'extra music', which gives concerts at unusual locations such as alpine huts. There are also the Gstaad conducting, string, vocal, Baroque and piano academies, and the Gstaad Festival Orchestra led by Principal Conductor Kristjan Järvi. In the centenary year of Menuhin's birth, memorial concerts include Paul McCreesh conducting the Gabrieli Choir, Consort and Players in Mozart's Requiem, and violinist Daniel Hope with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Other visiting orchestras include the Mariinsky with Valery Gergiev. Artists in the chamber strand include Maria João Pires and Sol Gabetta together in recital, pianist Louis Schwizgebel and Quatuor Ebène.

gstaadmenuhinfestival.ch

Herrenchiemsee Festival Germany

July 12-14

'Night music' is the theme this year, alluding to the range of experiences to be enjoyed during a festival visit to the Herreninsel island – from the ferry crossing and carriage ride to the castle, to the traditional alphorn-playing during the concert intermission and the twilight return journey. Andrew Parrott and the Taverner Choir open the festival with a concert on Fraueninsel island, which includes a number of Bach cantatas. The following evening they return with the Taverner Consort and Players to perform nocturnal-themed British repertoire. Other festival highlights include music director Enoch zu Guttenberg conducting Dvořák's Requiem.

herrenchiemsee-festspiele.de/

Incontri in Terra di Siena Italy

July 29 – August 6

The Tuscan chamber music festival opens this year with pianist Saleem

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Istanbul Music Festival

June 1 – 24

The theme for this year's Turkish festival, marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, is 'If Music be the Food of Love, Play On'. There are almost 600 local and international artists with 26 concerts taking place across 17 Istanbul venues.

Among the highlights is the world premiere of a festival commission by Özkan Manav, performed by Trio Arte with cellist Gérard Caussé. Guest orchestra-in-residence is the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, and other visiting artists and ensembles include pianists Murray Perahia and Maria João Pires, cellist Gautier Capuçon, violinist Maxim Vengerov, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Venice Baroque Orchestra. A new festival strand this year is Music Route, a musical and historical excursion across five churches in Beyoğlu, all of which are used as concert venues for the first time.

muzik.iksv.org/en



Beautiful venues abound at the Turkish festival

Ashkar performing with young musicians from Nazareth's Polyphony Conservatory. Other highlights include pianist Alessio Bax performing Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto with Southbank Sinfonia, and violinist Henning Kraggerud in recital with pianist Jeremy Menuhin.

itslaface.org

Indian Summer in Levoča Slovakia

September 9-13

The international festival takes place at the UNESCO World Heritage town of Levoča, Slovakia, in its historic theatre, its Congress Hall and its Black Church. Concerts feature performances of choral music from the 17th-century Levoča Codex, through to Prokofiev, Dohnányi, Nielsen and Bartók. Composers Ferruccio Busoni and William Sterndale Bennett are also programmed in their anniversary year. Featured artists include the Kodály Quartet, viola player Vladimir Mendelssohn, the rising Danish music stars tenor Jakob Vad and pianist Elisabeth Nielsen, and pianists Jonathan Powell and Mark Viner.

iblfestival.eu

Innsbruck Festival of Early Music Austria

July 19 – August 27

The festival turns 40 this year. A highlight of the celebrations is Artistic Director Alessandro De Marchi conducting Cimarosa's comic opera *Il matrimonio segreto*, with baritone Renato Girolami, *buffo* bass Donato di Stefano and Vesselina Kasarova. Among other key events are a concert performance of Gluck's *Alceste* conducted by René Jacobs, and the

opera *Le nozze in sogno*, which was only recently identified as being composed by Innsbruck's court composer Cesti. Other visiting artists and ensembles include countertenor Valer Sabadus, Il Giardino Armonico, Les Talens Lyriques and Fretwork. The Baroque opera singing competition also returns.

altemusik.at/en

International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht: Janine Jansen & Friends Netherlands

June 29 – July 3

This event is hosted by Utrecht's TivoliVredenburg. Appearing for the first time this year are cellist Steven Isserlis, tenor Ian Bostridge, clarinetist Martin Fröst, pianist Eldar Nebolsin and viola player Lawrence Power. Returning favourites are cellists Torleif Thedén and Jens-Peter Maintz, and violinist Boris Brovtsyn. Repertoire highlights include Shostakovich's Symphony No 15 in an arrangement for trio and three percussionists, and, to close the festival, Mendelssohn's Octet. There are also bicycle and walking-tour concerts, and family concerts.

kamermuziekfestival.nl

Itinéraire Baroque France

July 28-31

The Périgord Vert area of France's Dordogne region is the idyllic setting for Ton Koopman's early-music festival. The opening concert in Champagne stars Czech soprano and harpist Hana Blažiková in a JS Bach programme in which Koopman directs the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra from the keyboard. Then, the final concert in St Astier features Haydn's *Nelson*

Mass, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, and *Ave verum corpus*.
itinerairebaroque.com

Kissinger Sommer Germany June 24 – July 24

Kissinger Sommer celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. Unusually, the festival is framed by two concerts outside of the actual month, and both events boast big names. The May 20 prelude is given by mezzo Cecilia Bartoli, whilst the October 25 finale stars pianist Lang Lang. Then, artists appearing in the festival itself include pianists Grigory Sokolov, Daniil Trifonov, Fazil Say, Hélène Grimaud and Igor Levit, countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, clarinettist Sabine Meyer, cellist Jan Vogler, violinist Arabella Steinbacher and percussionist Martin Grubinger.
kissingersommer.de

Lavaux Classic Switzerland June 24 – July 3

Known as Cully Classique prior to this year, the annual Swiss festival is based in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Lavaux and its rename signals the fact that it's now extending its horizons to encompass the whole of the Lavaux region, while keeping Cully as its base. The theme for 2016 is 'Out of Bounds', focusing on composers from the Baroque era to the present day who have risen above tough restrictions to create their music. Visiting artists include pianists Boris Berezovsky and Pierre-Laurent Aimard, the Borodin Quartet, violinist Tedi Papavrami, and Italian early-music ensemble La Venexiana. With 22 paid concerts and around 30 free, open-air ones, there's a focus on decompartmentalising classical music: new initiatives include vineyard walks punctuated by pop-up musical performances and local produce tasting sessions.
lavauxclassic.ch

Lofoten Piano Festival Norway July 11 – 17

Set amidst the spectacular scenery of Norway's Lofoten Islands, this festival now alternates each year between piano and chamber music. This year it's the turn of the piano, under the artistic direction of Jean-Efflam Bavouzet; other pianists performing this year include Nelson Freire, Marc-André Hamelin, Ingrid Fliter, Joachim Carr and Bertrand Chamayou. They are joined by musicians including baritone Johannes Weisser, the Engeström Quartet and mezzo Marianne Beate Kielland. Supporting all these artists is The Lofoten Festival Strings, the piano festival's own string orchestra assembled and conducted by the chamber festival's artistic director, Arvid Engeström.
lofotenfestival.no

Lucerne Summer Festival Switzerland

August 12 – September 11
 Riccardo Chailly gives his first performance as the Lucerne Festival Orchestra's new music director, opening the festival with Mahler's Symphony No 8. Then, the overall theme is 'Prima Donna' with a focus on women as artists, meaning no fewer than 11 female conductors. Composer-in-residence Olga Neuwirth's new work for percussion and orchestra is given its world premiere by soloist Martin Grubinger with the Lucerne Festival Academy under Susanna Malkki. Emmanuelle Haïm conducts the Vienna Philharmonic, playing for its first time in Lucerne under the direction of a woman. Marin Alsop makes her Lucerne debut with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, while Barbara Hannigan conducts the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Other conductors are introduced, such as Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Anu Tali, Maria Schneider and Konstantia Gourzi. Visiting soloists include pianist Martha Argerich and violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter. Also, Wolfgang Rihm joins the Lucerne Festival Academy as its new artistic director.
lucernefestival.ch

Moritzburg Festival Germany August 6-21

Another Dresden-based festival under the artistic directorship of cellist Jan Vogler, the Moritzburg Festival has established itself as one of the most renowned international chamber music festivals since being founded in 1993. The idea is that established and young musicians rehearse then perform chamber music together in atmospheric venues just outside Dresden such as the Moritzburg and Proschwitz Castles, and also Dresden's Volkswagen Transparent Factory. Estonian Erkki-Sven Tüür is composer-in-residence this year. In 2016, the festival celebrates the 10th anniversary of its Academy, comprised of students selected from all over the world. The opening concert features Josep Caballé-Domenech conducting Rossini's overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Schumann's Symphony No 4.
moritzburgfestival.de/en

Munich Opera Festival Germany June 19 – July 31

Hosted by the Bayerische Staatsoper, this year boasts five new productions including two world premieres. Opening the festival is the premiere of Fromental Halévy's *La Juive*, directed by Calixto Bieito and starring Roberto Alagna and Kristine Opolais. The second premiere is a new production from Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui of Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera-ballet, *Les Indes*

Galantes, which is being performed in Munich for the very first time. The Festival Workshop stages Mauricio Kagel's *Mare Nostrum*, plus the world premiere of Hauke Berheide's *Mauerschau*, and *Tonguecat* by Saskia Bladt and Torsten Herrmann. The festival also features all the new productions from the 2015/16 season: *The Fiery Angel*, *Mefistofele*, *South Pole*, *Un ballo in maschera* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.
staatsoper.de

Musique Cordiale France

July 30 – August 13
 Orchestral concerts, song and oratorio feature in medieval hill towns between Nice and Aix-en-Provence, centred around Seillans where the Musique Cordiale Strings Academy, this year led by Levon Chilingirian and Susie Mészáros, is also based. Highlights include: performances of Handel's oratorio *Solomon*, with Graham Ross, music director of Clare College, Cambridge, and soloists John Savournin, Alexandra Hutton and Elizabeth Karani; young Swiss cellist Chiara Enderle performing Haydn's Cello Concerto in C; and James Lowe conducting the Festival Orchestra and Academy in Beethoven's Symphony No 1. There is also a series of free lunchtime chamber-music concerts and late-night recitals in the region's beautiful churches and chapels, and under the stars.
musique-cordiale.com

New Ross Piano Festival Ireland

September 22-25
 The headline artists coming to the south-eastern Irish port town of New Ross this year are Piers Lane, Nicholas Angelich, and the Ebène Quartet. Also performing, as usual, is the festival's artistic director, Finghin Collins. Then, the two up-and-coming pianists giving recitals this year are Jonathan Morris and Nathalia Milstein, who last year became the first-ever female winner of the Dublin International Piano Competition.
newrosspianofestival.com

Opera Days Rotterdam Netherlands May 20-29

This international festival has a special focus on new developments in opera and music theatre, staging performances at various locations around Rotterdam. The theme this year is 'New Ways', examining within the context of the current world climate what kind of a society we want for ourselves. Vocal theatre group Carmina Slovenica addresses the thin line between individual responsibility and religion with its production, *Toxic Psalms*. Another highlight is a production of

Wagner's *Parsifal*, directed by Arlon Luijten, in which the audience follows the action along various prominent locations in Rotterdam. Then, *Il ballo delle ingrate* features a duet between sopranos Claron McFadden and Nora Fischer via Skype.
operadagenrotterdam.nl/en

Prague Spring Festival Czech Republic

May 12 – June 4
 The festival turns 70 this year, and as a result the organisers have put together a starry line-up across their 50 concerts. A particular highlight is the Czech premiere of a monumental oratorio by the contemporary Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavičius. Then, as part of the Spanish and Baltic geographic threads running through the festival this year, Paavo Järvi conducts Smetana's *Má vlast* with the Czech Philharmonic. Visiting orchestras include the Staatskapelle Berlin with Daniel Barenboim, and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields with Murray Perahia. Among the soloists are pianist Maurizio Pollini and the winner of the 2015 Chopin Competition, Korean pianist Seong-Jin Cho, in a special pre-festival recital on May 7.
festival.cz/en

Prague Summer Nights Czech Republic

June 12 – July 10
 This festival offers young musicians the chance to perform concerts and opera as well as receive coaching from professional artists. Singers, under the stage direction of Sherrill Milnes and his wife Maria Zouves, take part in a fully staged production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in the Estates Theatre, the only remaining theatre in the world where Mozart conducted. There are also productions of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* at the St Simon and Jude Church where Haydn and Mozart performed. Young orchestral musicians give orchestral concerts, and there is tuition and a range of masterclasses from members of orchestras such as the Czech National Symphony, the Prague National Symphony and the Czech Philharmonic.
praguesummernights.com

Progetto Martha Argerich Switzerland

June 7-30
 It's all change in Lugano for 2016. Lugano Festival has been transformed into LuganoMusica, an annual season held at the LAC – Lugano's brand-new lakeside arts and cultural centre which opened in September – from September through to May. The season closes with the Progetto Martha Argerich, which is the only remaining actual festival in Lugano. Details of the



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GSTAAD MENUHIN FESTIVAL & ACADEMY

60th Gstaad Menuhin Festival – 14 July – 3 September 2016

For the centenary of the birth of its founder, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival is celebrating "family spirit"

The Menuhin Festival has been a family affair from the beginning. It was with his family in mind that Yehudi Menuhin decided to make Saanenland (Switzerland) his summer residence in the 1950's: the region was perfect for general well-being and relaxing from the stress of concert tours. And this is one of the reasons why the best musicians from around the world continue to gather every summer here in the Alps to provide the most beautiful music for thousands of music-lovers. The festival in 2016 will mark both its 60th anniversary as well as the centenary of the birth of its founder, and what theme could be more appropriate than "Music & Family"! From Bach



Yehudi Menuhin

to Strauss by way of Mozart and Schumann, from the Labèque and the Buniatishvili sisters to the Ottensamer family, from former students of Ivan Monighetti to upcoming young artists coming with Maria João Pires, the family sagas are numerous and the source of many wonderful stories and histories. Let us celebrate together with many of our artist friends (with a number of eminent violinists heading the list) who have expressed the desire to say "Happy Birthday Menuhin" with their music in Gstaad in the summer of 2016!

The Gstaad Menuhin Festival consists not only of concerts but also a music academy that continues to grow with each year. In the spirit of its founder – who liked nothing better than to make music with friends and to share his art with young musicians – the many master classes fill the halls and streets with a special spirit and energy throughout the length of the festival. The master classes include strings, voice, piano, early music as well as a formidable Conducting Academy initiated in 2014: three weeks of intensive classes under the direction of Neeme Järvi together with the festival's "house" orchestra, making Gstaad the unrivaled European pendant to Tanglewood.



Gstaad Menuhin Festival

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Verbier festival

Bizet's
Carmen

Verdi's
Falstaff

Berlioz's
Symphonie Fantastique

Malher's
Symphonie N° 3

Wagner evening

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Paavo Järvi

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Limelight Magazine

29 July - 5 August

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international artists collaborating with Argerich are being announced shortly, but confirmed as we went to press were two concerts with the Orchestra della Svizzera italiana at the LAC. The chamber-music concerts are held, as always, in the Radio Studio.

luganofestival.ch

Reykjavik Arts Festival Iceland

May/June

Events take place in numerous cultural venues in and around Reykjavik for this wide-ranging, multidisciplinary festival. A highlight this year is San Francisco Ballet performing Helgi Tomasson's *Homecoming* with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. Another is Vladimir Ashkenazy, the main force behind the establishment of the Reykjavik Arts Festival, conducting the Iceland Symphony Orchestra for the first time in 37 years in a programme including Beethoven's Symphony No 6.

en.listahatid.is

Rheingau Musik Festival Germany

June 18 - August 27

With 153 concerts held at 42 venues across the Rheingau and adjoining regions, this is a huge festival. Principal venues are Eberbach Monastery, Johannisberg Palace, and the Wiesbaden Assembly Rooms, in addition to numerous castles, churches and wineries. Dvořák's 175th birthday is marked this year, along with the themes 'Sound Forces' and 'Powerful Women'. Violinist Isabelle Faust is artist-in-residence, whilst other featured artists are the German trumpeter Till Brönner in 'Focus on Jazz', and conductor and pianist Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Amongst the many other artists and ensembles performing this year are violinist Lisa Batiashvili, pianist Jan Lisiecki, cellist Daniel Müller-Schott, Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, the Berliner Philharmonic and the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

rheingau-musik-festival.de

Salzburg Festival Austria

July 22 - August 31

Mozart's birthplace becomes the scene for opera, theatre and concerts each summer during this wide-ranging festival. Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe open the festival with a performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, with soloists Hanna-Elisabeth Müller, Werner Güra and Gerald Finley joining the Bavarian Radio Choir. Other concert highlights include Daniel Harding conducting the Vienna Philharmonic, and Concentus Musicus Wien and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir performing Beethoven's Ninth under Andrés

Orozco-Estrada. Operatic highlights include Anna Netrebko singing the title-role in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* conducted by Marco Armiliato, and Thomas Adès conducting his opera, *The Exterminating Angel*.

salzburgfestival.at

Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Angelika Kauffmann Hall Austria

June 18-26, August 23-31

(and, running parallel: Schubertiade Hohenems, Markus Sittikus Hall)

May 4-10, July 12-17, September 3-7, October 4-11)

Generally considered to be the most important Schubert festival in the world, this intimate alpine event presents about 80 events across two different venues, encompassing song recitals, piano recitals, chamber and orchestral concerts, lectures, exhibitions and masterclasses. This year marks its 40th anniversary, so the festival has been celebrating with a complete cycle of Schubert Lieder spread across the 2015 and 2016 seasons, alongside Lieder by other composers. Performing artists include mezzo Angelika Kirchschlager with pianist James Sherlock, baritone Matthias Goerne with pianist Alexander Schmalcz, and mezzo Magdalena Kožená with pianist Malcolm Martineau.

schubertiade.at/index.php?language=en

Stresa Festival Italy

July 19-24: Midsummer Jazz Concerts

July 26-28: Musical Meditation

August 23 - September 6:

Classical Music

This Italian festival is based on Lake Maggiore, with events taking place at venues such as the Borromeo Palace on Isola Bella, the Loggia del Cashmere on Isola Madre, the Santa Caterina del Sasso Hermitage, and the Rocca Borromeo in Angera. Midsummer Jazz Concerts open the festival in July, followed by a Musical Meditations strand. Then, the main festival begins in August under the artistic direction of Gianandrea Noseda; artists featuring in the daily concerts include Katia and Marielle Labèque, Jordi Savall, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra with violinist Renaud Capuçon and cellist Gautier Capuçon, and the Filarmonica Teatro Regio Torino and London Symphony Orchestra, both conducted by Gianandrea Noseda.

stresafestival.eu

Trasimeno Music Festival Italy

June 30 - July 6

Established by the pianist Angela Hewitt, this festival takes place in atmospheric venues such as the Castle of the Knights in Maggione, Perugia's Basilica of San Pietro, and, this year for the first time, the Teatro

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Savonlinna Opera Festival

July 8 - August 6 Finland

Operas at this Finnish festival take place in the grounds of the city's medieval Olavinlinna castle. Italian opera is the main theme this year, allowing the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death to be marked: Verdi's *Macbeth*, *Otello* and *Falstaff* are all being staged. The season also includes Puccini's *La bohème* and Bellini's *Norma* (both of which are appearing on the Olavinlinna stage for the first time), Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*. The Festival also welcomes two Italian guests, the Teatro Regio Torino and forces from the Ravenna Festival (Riccardo Muti accompanying the latter). Concerts include Franz Schubert's Mass in A flat, performed in Kerimäki Church.

operafestival.fi/en



Verdi's Macbeth is being staged this year

Signorelli in Cortona, Tuscany. The opening concert is in Perugia, with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi performing a programme of Brahms and Schumann, conducted by Hannu Lintu and featuring Hewitt as soloist. Trumpeter Matthew Sadler and cellist Pieter Wispelwey join the orchestra the following evening at Foligno's Auditorium San Domenico. Jeffrey Tate and Angela Hewitt perform a special piano duet recital in Trevi, while other artists include the Quartetto di Cremona and the soprano Susan Bullock.

trasimenomusicfestival.com

Verbier Festival Switzerland

July 22 - August 7

This alpine festival mixes masterclasses with world-class chamber and symphonic performances. Charles Dutoit gives the opening concert, conducting the Verbier Festival Orchestra in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Kyung Wha Chung. Michael Tilson Thomas closes the festival, conducting the orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No 3 with soloist Nathalie Stutzmann. Also conducting the Festival Orchestra this year are Paavo Järvi and Jesús López-Cobos. Meanwhile, the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra, under the music direction of Gábor Takács-Nagy, welcomes guest conductors such as Marc Minkowski. Visiting soloists include Bryn Terfel in a concert version of Verdi's *Falstaff*, and guitarist Miloš Karadaglić in a Spanish evening.

verbierfestival.com

Verona Arena Opera Festival

Italy

June 24 - August 28

Verona's arena, the third-largest Roman amphitheatre in the world,

is the spectacular setting for this Italian opera festival. Franco Zeffirelli's 1995 production of Bizet's *Carmen* opens the festival. Then, there are three Verdi operas - *Aida*, *La traviata* and *Il trovatore* - and also Puccini's *Turandot*. There is dance, too, starring Roberto Bolle and Friends.

arena.it

West Cork Chamber Music Festival Ireland

July 1-9

The coastal town of Bantry in Ireland's County Cork welcomes a strong roster of performing artists for this festival's 21st year. The opening concert includes violinist Nurit Stark performing the world premiere of Deirdre Gribbin's *Devil's Dwelling Place*. Visiting string quartets include the Chiaroscuro Quartet, of which Alina Ibragimova is a member, and the Kelemen Quartet. Other highlights include a solo recital from violinist Tamsin Waley-Cohen, and soprano Carolyn Sampson with Concerto Copenhagen. Sampson is also the highlight of a series of talks.

westcorkmusic.ie

Zeist Music Days

Netherlands

August 13-27

Held in the central Netherlands town of Zeist, this chamber-music festival welcomes artists including the Emerson Quartet, the Belcea Quartet and the Artemis Quartet. There is also a series of masterclasses for ensembles given by violinist Alexander Pavlovsky, cellists Valentin Erben and Orfeo Mandozzi, pianist Robert Kulek, the Emerson Quartet and Cuarteto Quiroga. The masterclasses are followed by a student-concert tour.

zeistmusicdays.nl,
zeistmuziekdagen.nl



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NORTH AMERICA FESTIVALS

Bard SummerScape NY

July 1 - August 14

This year the Hudson Valley festival presents a seven-week intensive exploration of 'Puccini and his world'. The Richard B Fisher Center is the venue for many of the performances, led by the festival's co-artistic director Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra. The festival centrepiece is the two weekends of the Bard Music Festival, over which several operas are performed, both complete and as major excerpts, including Massenet's *La navarraise*, and Berio's completion of the last act of *Turandot*, paired with Busoni's setting of the same tale. Other Bard SummerScape highlights include a production of Mascagni's *Iris*, directed by Los Angeles-based director James Darrah, and the world premiere of *Fantasque*, a collaboration between choreographer John Heginbotham and puppeteer Amy Trompetter set to the Respighi/Rossini ballet score *La boutique fantasque*. fishercenter.bard.edu/summerscape

Blossom Music Festival OH

July 2 - September 4

The Cleveland Orchestra's annual summer festival takes place at Ohio's Blossom Music Center. Highlights include Music Director Franz Welser-Möst conducting Beethoven's *Eroica*, the Blossom Festival Orchestra performing the symphonic rendition of The Who's rock opera *Quadrophenia*, and Michael Feinstein conducting Blossom's Fourth of July star-spangled celebration. The Silk Road

Ensemble and cellist Yo-Yo Ma are also performing, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra makes its Blossom Music Festival debut. clevelandorchestra.com

Bravo! Vail CO

June 23 - August 6

This season is a landmark for Bravo! Vail in that it features the festival's first-ever residency of an international chamber orchestra, London's Academy of St Martin in the Fields, led by its music director Joshua Bell. The Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic all return for residencies, with concerts featuring pianists Jeremy Denk and Jean-Yves Thibaudet, violinists Leila Josefowicz and Augustin Hadelich, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Ellis Hall, and the Dover Quartet. bravovail.org

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music CA

July 31 - August 13

This festival champions works that are rarely more than a year or two old with members of the public who attend open rehearsals of the music prior to the concerts. This year it's the festival's music director Marin Alsop's 25th anniversary and also her final season, so this is very much a celebration of her artistic imprint on the event. Amongst three world premieres is a new symphonic ballet by Anna Clyne, created with choreographer Kitty MacNamee. John Adams is just one of the many composers-in-residence this year. cabrillomusic.org

Caramoor Summer Music Festival NY

June 18 - August 7

Caramoor is a country-house estate in Katonah, Westchester, an hour's drive from Manhattan, consisting of 90 acres of Italianate architecture and gardens. On offer are American-roots concerts and jazz alongside orchestral, chamber and operatic performances. Equally, young artists share the programme with established soloists. The resident Orchestra of St. Luke's is led this summer by Pablo Heras-Casado. Joshua Weilerstein and Rob Fisher. Besides collaborating with soloists, including this season's artist-in-residence, pianist Jonathan Biss, they anchor semi-staged productions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and the US premiere of Rossini's long-lost opera, *Aureliano in Palmira*. caramoor.org

Carmel Bach Festival CA

July 16-30

Under the artistic direction of Paul Goodwin, events for this Californian festival take place in Carmel and the surrounding areas, with main concerts in Carmel's Sunset Center and the weekly principal choral event in Carmel's Mission Basilika. The festival has its own resident chamber orchestra made up of modern and period instruments (the only one of its kind in the States), a chamber choir led by Andrew Megill, and five international soloists including Mhairi Lawson. 'Bach Inspires!' is the theme this year, and the opening night features the Festival Orchestra under Paul Goodwin in a rare performance of CPE Bach's *Magnificat*. The 100th anniversary of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea is also being celebrated at this year's event. bachfestival.org

Festival del Sole CA

July 15-24

The Festival del Sole offers more than 60 events encompassing music, dance, theatre and gastronomy in California's Napa Valley. Around 100 wineries are participating, with performances from major musicians taking place at vintners' lunches, winery dinners, wine tastings, community concerts and wellness activities. Highlights include violinist Sarah Chang with Festival Orchestra NAPA performing Astor Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, a Dance Gala with the San Francisco Ballet under the direction of Helgi Tomasson, baritone Lester Lynch in a programme of American Spirituals at Mont LaSalle Chapel, and an Opera Gala featuring tenor Michael Fabiano

and mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, with Festival Orchestra NAPA under the baton of Carlo Ponti. festivaldelsole.org

Glimmerglass Festival CA

July 8 - August 27

The Glimmerglass Festival presents four mainstage productions of opera and musical theatre every summer. The core offerings are new productions of Puccini's *La bohème*, Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie (La gazza ladra)* and Robert Ward's *The Crucible*. The company rounds out the season with a schedule including concerts, public masterclasses, and a world-premiere youth opera. glimmerglass.org

Grand Teton Music Festival WY

July 4 - August 20

For 55 years, this festival has united musicians from the nation's top ensembles for seven weeks of orchestral and chamber concerts in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Under the leadership of music director Donald Runnicles, the festival welcomes Joshua Bell, Nicola Benedetti and Jonathan Biss this season. gtmf.org

International Piano Festival, Princeton University NJ

July 10-16

This piano festival runs in tandem with the Golandsky Institute's Summer Symposium, providing the evening's entertainment after the symposium's lectures, masterclasses, private lessons and technique clinics. Pianists this year include: Josu de Solan, first prize-winner of the XIII George Enescu International Piano Competition; Fabrizio Chiovetta, who specialises in Viennese repertoire on original instruments; and Wei Luo, Ilya Itin, Bill Charlup and David Shimon. golandskyinstitute.org

June in Buffalo NY

June 6-13

Presented and hosted by the University at Buffalo's music department, June in Buffalo is a festival and conference dedicated to composers. It offers an intensive schedule of seminars, lectures, workshops, professional presentations, participant forums and open rehearsals as well as afternoon and evening concerts open to the general public and critics. The Arditti Quartet is a resident ensemble, along with Ensemble Dal Niente and the Uusinta Ensemble. Senior/faculty composers involved for the first time include Hans Abrahamsen,

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Aspen Music Festival and School

June 30 - August 21

'Invitation to Dance' is the 2016 theme for this Colorado mountain festival, exploring the uses of dance form in music. Opera-wise, the Aspen Opera Center presents Puccini's *La bohème*, William Bolcom's *A Wedding*, and, in a nod to Shakespeare's anniversary, Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*. 'An American Musical Century' is another major focus, featuring 20th-century American works from composers including Charles Ives, Roger Sessions and George Antheil, performed by artists such as violinist Gil Shaham and conductor Leon Botstein. Twenty-first-century music also features, most particularly in the form of John Luther Adams's *Inuksuit*, while music director Robert Spano conducts Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin*. Amongst the many artists appearing this year are conductors Ludovic Morlot and Vasily Petrenko, violinist Midori and pianist Yefim Bronfman. aspenmusicfestival.com



Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* comes to Aspen

Hanna Eimermacher and Josh Levine. There are also return visits from guitarist Magnus Andersson and Ensemble Signal.
music21c.org

Lincoln Center Festival NY

July 13-31

Celebrating its 20th birthday this year, the festival consists of 49 dance, music, and theatre performances. Opening night features two ritualised productions which have their origins in Japan and China, respectively: one of Japan's Noh theatre companies, Kanze Noh Theatre, makes an appearance on an official Noh stage being specially built at the Rose Theater; and there's also the one-act opera *Paradise Interrupted*, from Chinese-American composer Huang Ruo and visual artist Jennifer Wen Ma. Another highlight is 'Reich/Reverberations', three concerts highlighting Steve Reich's chamber works
lincolncenterfestival.org

Marlboro Music VT

July 16 - August 14

With pianist Mitsuko Uchida as its music director, this rural Vermont chamber festival gives young professionals the opportunity to collaborate with mature professionals in a mentoring relationship. After three weeks of daily rehearsals, the artists present the results of their collaborations in public concerts.
marlboromusic.org

Mostly Mozart Festival NY

July 22 - August 27

In the festival's 50th-anniversary season, highlights include an evening of Mozart's opera arias directed by Netia Jones, concert versions of *Così fan tutte* and *Idomeneo*, a presentation of Mark Morris's *Mozart Dances*, and 50 new works performed in micro-concerts around the city. Additional events include films, lectures and chamber music.
mostlymozart.org

Music Academy of the West CA

June 13 - August 6

The Music Academy of the West auditions top students from around the world who then spend a tuition-free summer performing and studying with an illustrious faculty. This year the Academy hosts US conductor and composer Matthew Aucoin for seven weeks as artist-in-residence at its ocean-side campus. He conducts *The Bartered Bride* as well as his eco-friendly original work, *Second Nature*.
musicacademy.org

Music@Menlo Chamber Music Festival & Institute CA

July 15 - August 6

Under the artistic directorship of

David Finckel and Wu Han, the festival is based in Menlo Park, California, and has an adjoining chamber-music institute for young and emerging professional musicians. This year's theme is 'Russian Reflections' with highlights including the opening concert: pianist Lucille Chung performs Scriabin's *Vers la flamme* and violinist Elmar Oliveira performs Rachmaninov's *Trio élégiaque*, with cellist Paul Watkins and pianist Alon Goldstein.

musicatmenlo.org

Ravinia Festival IL

June - September

Ravinia is North America's oldest outdoor music festival, set in Highland Park, Illinois, and is the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's summer residency, now in its 80th year. One highlight is James Levine, festival director from 1971 to 1993, returning to conduct the CSO and Chorus in Mahler's Symphony No 2. Another is the US premiere of Wynton Marsalis's Violin Concerto No 1 with violinist Nicola Benedetti.

ravinia.org

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival NM

July 17 - August 22

Set against the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the festival presents six weeks of concerts, recitals, masterclasses, youth concerts, and open rehearsals. Musical strands include the output of three Bachs - Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Christian and Wilhelm Friedemann. British composers are being explored too, from Purcell to Knussen. Regarding new music, artistic director Marc Neikrug has commissioned works from Gideon Lewensohn, Poul Ruders and Elizabeth Ogonek. This year's artist-in-residence is Peter Serkin.
santafechambermusic.com

Ojai Music Festival CA

June 9-12

A different music director curates this southern California festival each year, and as the festival turns 70, it's Peter Sellars's turn. A highlight is the US premiere of Kaija Saariaho's chamber version of *La passion de Simone*, staged by Peter Sellars. Another Saariaho work receiving its US premiere, and equally staged by Sellars, is *Only the Sound Remains*. World premieres include Caroline Shaw's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* and 'Josephine Baker: Personal Portrait' with music by Tyshawn Sorey.

ojaifestival.org

Savannah Voice Festival GA

August 7-21

Now in its fourth year, the Georgia festival is themed 'A Summer of Romance' and again includes operas, concerts, masterclasses and special events directed by its founders,

CELEBRATING SHAKESPEARE'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

The Santa Fe Opera

July 1 - August 27

Harry Bicket conducts Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, with Ailyn Pérez as Juliette and Stephen Costello making his Santa Fe debut as Roméo. But this festival, based in New Mexico, opens with Richard Jones's popular production of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, with Patricia Racette in her role debut as Minnie. Then, John Nelson conducts Ron Daniels' new production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, starring Daniel Okulitch. There's also Strauss's *Capriccio* with a cast headed by Amanda Majeski, Susan Graham and Eric Owens, and Barber's *Vanessa*, starring Erin Wall in the title-role alongside Zach Borichevsky as Anatol.
santafeopera.org



Santa Fe's festival opener is *La fanciulla del West*

baritone Sherrill Milnes and his wife, soprano Maria Zouves. The opening opera is Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* starring Brazil's Santiago Ballerini. There's also Michael Ching's *Alice Ryley, a Savannah Ghost Story*, starring Milnes.

savannahvoicefestival.org

Seattle Symphony WA

June 17 - July 3

This festival from the Seattle Symphony is so new that there wasn't yet an official title as we went to press! Ten concerts showcase the diversity of 20th- and 21st-century American music, with music director Ludovic Morlot and the orchestra exploring everything from avant-garde to minimalism, from jazz to Broadway. Highlights include a celebration of the theremin, reflections on 9/11, and a continuation of the orchestra's relationship with composer John Luther Adams.
seattlesymphony.org

Spoletto Festival May SC

May 27 - June 12

Charleston, South Carolina, hosts this multi-arts festival, which turns 40 this year. A highlight is a new production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*; directed by David Herskovits with visual design by Jonathan Green, it is staged in the newly renovated Gaillard Center. There is also Phelim McDermott's new production of Lachenmann's *The Little Match Girl* and the US premiere of a Baroque opera, Antoine Dauvergne's *La double coquette*, with additions by Gerard Pesson. There is also a 40th-season anniversary concert.
spoletousa.org

Stratford Summer Music ON

July 18 - August 28

The annual, multi-week Canadian

music festival is held at venues throughout downtown Stratford, Ontario, and this year takes choral music as its theme. There are classical performances in historic churches by organists, pianists, quartets and orchestras, as well as lectures, concerts in unique settings, and world music on the riverbank.
stratfordsummermusic.ca

Tanglewood MA

July 8 - August 28

Tanglewood is the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. As the orchestra's music director, Andris Nelson leads four BSO concerts this summer, collaborating with pianist Jonathan Biss in Mozart, violinist Augustin Hadelich in Sibelius, soprano Kristine Opolais in part of Verdi's *Aida*, and pianist Dejan Lazic in Saint-Saëns. Nelsons also conducts an all-Brahms concert with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra and pianist Paul Lewis. Other conductors include Christoph von Dohnányi, who conducts the final concert featuring, as usual, Beethoven's Symphony No 9.
bso.org

Tippet Rise MT

June 17 - August 21

A brand-new cultural destination, based near Montana's Beartooth Mountains, Tippet Rise Art Center presents its inaugural music season. Twenty concerts are performed at sites throughout Tippet Rise's 11,500 acres, in settings that include the 150-seat Olivier Barn, the open-sided Tiara band shell, and the sculptural, open-air Domo. Highlights include a piano-recital series featuring Stephen Hough, Nikolai Demidenko, Konstantin Lifschitz and Yevgeny Sudbin. There is also the world premiere of a vocal work by Antón García-Abril.
tippetrise.org



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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Harriet Smith hails Yevgeny Sudbin's second disc of Scarlatti keyboard sonatas, released a decade after his first




D Scarlatti

'18 Sonatas'

Keyboard Sonatas – Kk9; Kk12; Kk29; Kk32; Kk56; Kk69; Kk99; Kk119; Kk125; Kk159, 'La caccia'; Kk141; Kk208; Kk213; Kk318; Kk373; Kk417; Kk425; Kk479

Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*

BIS (F)  BIS2138 (74' • DDD/DSD)

Back in the May 2005 issue of *Gramophone*, Bryce Morrison extolled the virtues of a Scarlatti disc by a young Russian pianist. His name was Yevgeny Sudbin and it was his debut on BIS. Ten years on, Sudbin decided it was time for another instalment: 18 more sonatas, as enterprisingly and imaginatively programmed as on that first disc.

In the playing itself, there's the same familiar mix of virtuosity and refinement that marked out the first CD. Sudbin embraces the full resources of his Steinway Model D to recreate this music for a modern age, describing what he does in his eloquent booklet essay as 'in effect a piano transcription'. Just as Horowitz had his pianos doctored to create the right sound and reactivity for Scarlatti's unique musical vision, so Sudbin changes textures, shifts phrases up an octave and avails himself of the sustaining pedal in a way that will have purists fleeing for cover. Yet even they should perhaps give pause before rejecting such vitally alive musicianship.

The opening 'Fuga', Kk417, becomes a miniature symphony in scope, from its fervently enunciated opening scale through to the Sudbin-enhanced orchestral richness of its closing moments. Repeats are never merely that – he's not content simply to add ornamentation or change a dynamic; instead we get a sense of true development. This might sound contrived on paper, and could



'Sudbin embraces the full resources of his Steinway Model D to recreate this music for a modern age'

well have been in the hands of a lesser musician, but Sudbin is an artist of rare refinement, as he constantly demonstrates here. He pushes the boundaries, yes, but never simply for shock effect. Just listen



to what he does in the first half of the A major Sonata, Kk208, where what was a simple crotchet accompaniment in the left hand suddenly wakes up in the repeat and starts a dialogue with the right. It works because, without a score in front of you, it's hard to tell what is the work of the composer and what the pianist, so naturally do the two combine. Scarlatti's sonatas were the food of Sudbin's youthful studies in Russia ('he was almost considered a "Russian" composer since his sonatas were standard repertoire for any student at the conservatories and music schools') – and it shows in his sense of complete familiarity with the music, one that allows him tremendous freedom.

Each piece offers fresh delights: Sudbin's C major Sonata, Kk159, is extraordinary for its range of colour – the way he gives the opening horn calls a delicate haze of pedal the second time around, and adds ornamentation that in less subtle hands would be merely outlandish, yet which he carries off with aplomb. In the same sonata,

Angela Hewitt, on her recent disc, sounds merely careful by comparison.

Some might find that the poignancy of the F minor Sonata, Kk69, comes across most powerfully when played simply (by Anne Queffélec, for example, or Marcelle Meyer), yet Sudbin's view of it as an operatic scena of the utmost tension is endlessly fascinating. Again, turn to Hewitt's recent performance and what's striking is that, though Sudbin is much more radical, Hewitt is the one who sounds less natural. He follows this piece with the restlessly brilliant Kk425 – a minefield for anyone not at the top of their game – in which he conveys not only virtuosity but a confiding quality too.

He shares with Horowitz an ability to conjure up landscapes



Complete familiarity and tremendous freedom: Sudbin offers Scarlatti playing of daring originality in his second collection of the composer's sonatas

and narratives within these sonatas, so vividly and intensely are they etched. The rarely played Kk99 is given time to unfold expansively, its moments of Spanishry given with due generosity, while the downwards-rushing scales of the G minor Sonata, Kk373, are vibrantly given. Scarlatti's famously treacherous repeated notes clearly hold no fears either, no matter how fast the tempo marking: just sample what he does in Kk29, 125 and 141, in the last of these outplaying even Pletnev, which is no mean feat.

And even in a piece as well known as Kk9, one of the highlights on Queffélec's disc, Sudbin finds a rare lightness and dexterity that leaves most others sounding ponderous. When he starts to play with things even more in the

second half, it's astonishing and utterly mesmerising. The result could have been show-offy, and it's a tribute to his pianism and musicality that it doesn't sound that way at all.

The triumph of this disc is not that it makes you think 'what wonderful playing', but 'what wonderful sonatas'. Again and again you marvel at Scarlatti's endless invention. And, tellingly, Sudbin ends on a profound note with the tenderly inward Kk32, again given a lusciously vocal quality, which is beautifully captured by BIS's sensitive recording. A winner. **G**

Keyboard Sonatas – selected comparisons:

Meyer (3/86) (EMI) 568092-2*

Pletnev (3/96) (VIRG) 561961-2 or 232281-2 & 928270-2*

Queffélec (3/95) (ERAT) 5046 66988-2*

Hewitt (2/16) (HYPE) CDA67613

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		oas	only available separately



Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Harriet Smith on Stephen Hough's Dvůřak and Schumann concertos

'Hough enters the conversation with great subtility and he's unafraid to point out the score's lyrical beauties' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



Edward Seckerson listens to Jaap van Zweden's Mahler 3:

'The assorted flora and fauna of the inner movements are well attended with fragrant and elegant playing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**

J Anderson

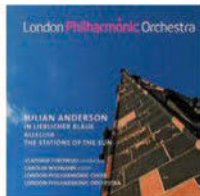
In lieblicher Bläue^a. Alleluia^b.

The Stations of the Sun^c

^aCarolyn Widmann *vn* London Philharmonic ^bChoir and Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski

LPO ® LPO0089 (54' • DDD • T/D)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, ^cDecember 7, 2013, ^bMarch 1, 2014, ^aMarch 14, 2015



This is the fourth disc to be devoted exclusively to the music of Julian

Anderson and the second such venture on the LPO's own label, reflecting his stint as Composer in Residence with the orchestra, 2010-14. Intriguing as it is, I'm not sure newcomers would be best advised to start with *In lieblicher Bläue* (2014-15), which contains some spatial and symbolic elements not readily perceptible in audio format. Carolyn Widmann's physical location and posture change throughout. At one point a vaguely Schnittke-like gesture requires the soloist to lay down the bow and play using a pencil. While the composer's lucid explanatory note survives inept editing, those familiar with Friedrich Hölderlin's late prose-poem may have a head start in appreciating music at once lyrical and beautifully voiced but elusive by design in its troubled search for identity.

There is more concerto-like display in the companion pieces. The joyous *Alleluia*, commissioned for the reopening of the Royal Festival Hall following its refurbishment in 2007, was originally programmed as an up-beat to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and makes memorable and idiomatic use of the London Philharmonic Choir, with whom the composer himself has sung. The writing is characteristic in its insistent mix of glitter and grit, new (American) colours added to an eclectic pick of the 20th-century bran tub. Homegrown influences are more strongly felt in *The Stations of the Sun* (1998), a 'carillonading and tumultuous' yet emotionally engaging Proms commission

of which composer-conductor Oliver Knussen made the first studio recording some years ago. The two share a fondness for skirling woodwind and meaningful harmonic movement.

If Vladimir Jurowski's punchy performances were indeed captured live with only minimal patching, they are all three remarkably accomplished. Applause has been expunged and the sound is good too. **David Gutman**

Atterberg

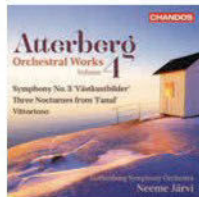
'Orchestral Works, Vol 4'

Symphony No 3, 'Väst kustbilder', Op 10.

Three Nocturnes, Op 35bis. Vittorioso, Op 58

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos © CHAN10894 (62' • DDD)



Atterberg's Third Symphony was assembled in stages between 1914 and

1916 from ideas for three seascapes/tone-poems that – after the premiere of the central *Storm*, with which the opening *Summer Haze* was also performed – convinced him to make a unified whole. Despite the piecemeal creation, the Third is arguably the finest of Atterberg's nine, and there are some who rate it one of the finest Nordic symphonies of the first half of the 20th century. I am not inclined to disagree, allowing that it is a primarily descriptive or illustrative work; and Järvi's beautifully crafted account, with some delicious playing from the Gothenburgers, makes a superb case for it. If no one has quite managed the magic of the opening pages as did Ehrling (whose account is still available, download-only, from Caprice), this newcomer is a close second, with the best sound, the performance richer and fuller than Rasilainen's.

Atterbergians will be excited about the fillers, premiere recordings of the *Three Nocturnes* (1929-32) and *Vittorioso* (1962). Both are drawn, as is the Seventh Symphony, *Sinfonia romantica*, from his

third opera *Fanal*, which dealt with the capture and rescue of a princess during the Peasants' War in Germany in 1525. The colourfully contrasting and descriptive *Nocturnes* follow aspects of the drama, as their titles reveal: 'The Flight to the Executioner's Cottage', 'The Dream, March to the Scaffold' and 'The Awakening'. *Vittorioso*, which can be played separately, as an optional finale to the Seventh or – as here – as a fourth *Nocturne*, catches the happy ending very nicely. Yet though Järvi and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra deliver the *Nocturnes* and *Vittorioso* with total conviction, it is *West Coast Pictures* that lingers longest in the memory. **Guy Rickards**

Symphony No 3 – selected comparisons:

Frankfurt RSO, Rasilainen (7/05) (CPO) CPO999 640-2

Stockholm PO, Ehrling (3/84^{re}, 10/89)

(CAPR) ► CAP21 364

JS Bach

Violin Concertos – BWV1041; BWV1042.

Concerto for Two Violins, BWV1043^a.

Concerto for Violin and Oboe, BWV1060^b.

Cantata No 21 – Sinfonia

Cecilia Bernardini, ^aHuw Daniel *vn*s ^bAlfredo

Bernardini *ob* Dunedin Consort / John Butt

Linn © CKD519 (59' • DDD)



This new disc of Bach concertos has attributes we have come to expect

from the Dunedin Consort and Linn, namely neat, stylish and uncomplicated performances in a recording of beautifully judged clarity and resonance. As in this group's *Brandenburg Concertos* set of three years ago (A/13), the playing is relaxed in tempo and temper, and free of mannerism (though wisps of ornamentation are allowed here and there). The orchestra is a small one of six violins and one of everything else, slightly backgrounded in the recording but under John Butt's ever-insightful direction an alert and supportive presence to the soloists nevertheless.



John Butt directs the Dunedin Consort from the harpsichord in Bach's violin concertos

And the soloists are good, headed by the Dunedins' leader Cecilia Bernardini, who shows that these familiar pieces still have plenty to say if you just play them with the right balance of technique, tone and musicality; in slow movements she is affecting without one being able to say quite how she has achieved it, which is surely a valuable quality. She is well matched, too, in the Double Concerto by Huw Daniel, and together they work up an appropriate head of steam in the finale. But I'm sure these two gifted young violinists won't mind too much if I say that the attention is taken rather by the oboe-playing of Cecilia's father Alfredo, who, whether in the faster music of BWV1060 or the aching held notes of the Sinfonia to Cantata No 21, displays a languid lyricism so unfussy and unhurried that it almost seems as if the oboe is playing itself – except that only a real human soul could draw from it the stab of pain that is his first note in the Sinfonia. It makes him a perfect 'guest artist' for this ensemble. Those who desire readings of similar caste but more overt interpretative intervention may prefer Rachel Podger and Brecon Baroque (Channel Classics, 10/10), but there is plenty to enjoy from the Dunedins, who show here that a light interpretative touch does not have to be a casual one. **Lindsay Kemp**

Bartók · Prokofiev

'1930s Violin Concertos, Vol 2'

Bartók Violin Concerto No 2, Sz112^a

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No 2, Op 63^b

Gil Shaham *vn*

^aStuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Stéphane Denève; ^bThe Knights / **Eric Jacobsen**

Canary Classics © CC16 (62 • DDD)



In recent years Gil Shaham has taken up the cudgels for the music of a decade

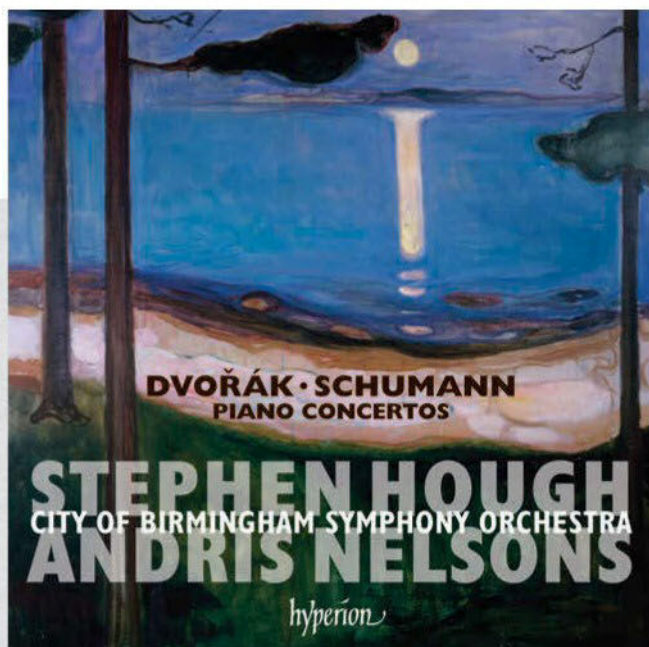
which, he would argue, yielded more great violin concertos than any other. His ongoing series of (mostly) live recordings began with an attractively packaged multi-disc instalment (Canary Classics, 4/14). Vol 2 consists of just two works, recorded in the studio and accompanied by generous documentation. Curiously, perhaps, he has chosen pieces already in his discography.

If the 1930s saw a resort to older archetypes and a drive to communicate urgent truths to bigger audiences, Shaham is certainly up for that in the 2010s. It's there in his engaging stage manner too; just a pity he is prone to relegating his accompanists to the middle distance. This being an own-

label project one must assume he actually likes the microphone placement in the Prokofiev concerto. Here the intimacy of the music-making – The Knights are a modestly sized orchestral collective from Brooklyn – has been compromised by a cavernous acoustic in which woodwind solos come through well enough but string lines don't make their proper impact. The slow movement, taken a little deliberately for my taste (and a long way from Jascha Heifetz's quick-fire conception), suffers most. Key countermelodies are rendered well-nigh inaudible. André Previn's LSO is a more tangible presence in Shaham's tauter, more conventional, less sinister 1995 account.

With the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra under Stéphane Denève replacing Pierre Boulez's formidable Chicagoans in the Bartók, the boot is on the other foot. I was anticipating a performance a little different in tone, lighter and freer. Speeds are indeed faster overall, the mood feistier, while the soloist's glorious old-school sonority ensures that lyrical moments are never undersold as they can be with today's more insistently innovative interpreters. The recording, credited to SWR, sounds well enough. One final oddity is that the CD requires the volume to be set rather lower than usual. **David Gutman**

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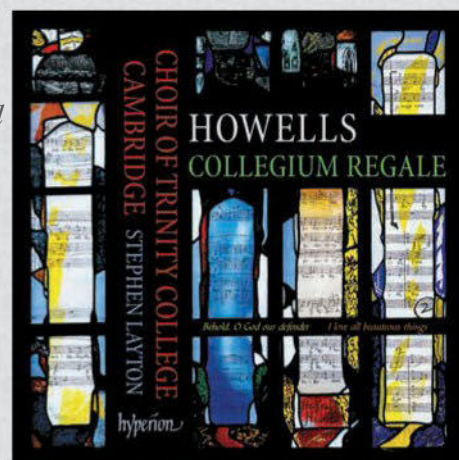
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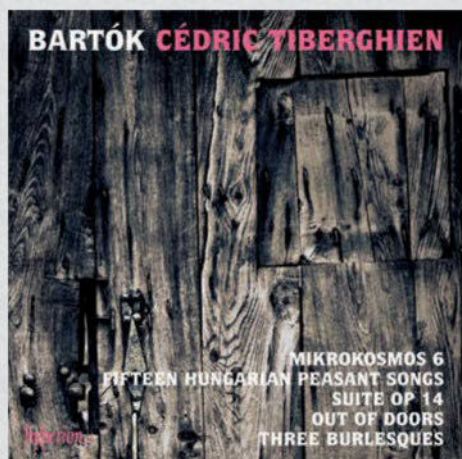
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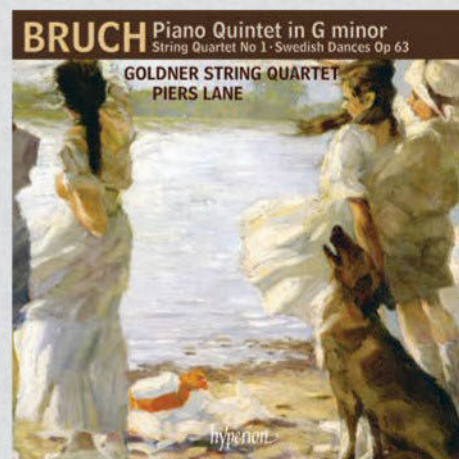
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Prokofiev – selected comparison:

Shabam, LSO, Previn (6/96) (DG) 447 758-2GH

Bartók – selected comparison:

Shabam, Chicago SO, Boulez (6/99) (DG) 459 639-2GH

M Bates

Attack Decay Sustain Release. Desert

Transport. Mothership. Rusty Air in Carolina. Sea-Blue Circuitry

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose

BMOP/sound ④ 1045 (54' • DDD/DSD)

M Bates

Alternative Energy. The B-Sides. Liquid Interface

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra /

Michael Tilson Thomas with Mason Bates *elec*s

SFS Media ④ SFS0065 (71' • DDD/DSD)



A jet engine revs at the start of *Mothership* (2010) by Mason Bates, something like a spacecraft taking off. (At least, I assume from the movies that's what a spaceship taking off sounds like.) Soon a cheerful groove cuts in and violins and flutes are darting about in nimble loops. We're off. 'I look to the digital world as an important 21st-century expansion of the orchestral sound world,' says Bates, a 39-year-old California-based DJ and composer who in recent years has become one of the most frequently performed living composers in US orchestral music. He doesn't exactly set out to 'reinvent' classical music – that dubious onus has been landed on him by various promoters, grasping at a new fix to old issues around image and audience demographics – but neither is the jet engine accidental. He wants to re-launch orchestral music for the digital age and sees an incorporation of electronic sounds, samples, field recordings and techno-inspired drum beats as a natural evolution, 'like valves in brass instruments once were'.

What's striking about this pair of new releases is how much of Bates's brave new language can end up sounding pretty familiar. A piece like *Sea-Blue Circuitry* (2010) has the happy swagger of John Adams, the open horizons of Copland, the urban glitches of Bernstein. It's a punchy cocktail, sweet and easy to drink, but its ingredients aren't radical. Bates is good at writing layers and swells and sparky banter between sections of the orchestra; he's also prone to underpinning soaring horn melodies with beefy pedal notes à la John Williams. From 1990s techno he has gleaned the art of pacing that induces a

properly physical response: imagine a nightclub full of dancers throwing their arms in the air when a big beat finally lands. Maybe it's an older trick of build-and-release channelled straight from Wagner. Either way, I think we're supposed to feel this music as much as hear it.

Bates himself plays electronics on both recordings and on both he succeeds in making the blend feel right. Of the two discs, the plusher sounds come from Michael Tilson Thomas and his San Francisco band, while Gil Rose and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project give fizzier, lighter, blither performances. The differences suit the respective repertoire.

The San Francisco album contains Bates's biggest orchestral pieces to date. *The B-Sides* (2009) was commissioned by Tilson Thomas as a companion suite to Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* – which seems a bit ironic considering B-sides were traditionally the platform for artists to explore arcane material and Bates's chipper tonality is immeasurably more accessible than Schoenberg ever was. *Liquid Interface* (2007) is the piece Bates considers his first symphony and Tilson Thomas gives it grand space, weight and drive accordingly. The grittiest moments come in *Alternative Energy* (2011), whose extramusical references include particle colliders and climate disaster. Yet Tilson Thomas goes only so far with the dark and clanky stuff; he is quick to revert to glossy sheen.

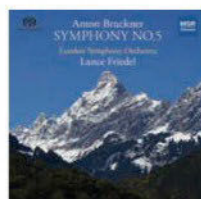
Meanwhile the BMOP collection covers five popular concert openers and tone-poems. *Mothership* is spry and blatant and fun. *Sea-Blue Circuitry* is a kind of bright, zesty pastoralism. *Attack Decay Sustain Release* (2013) is a blazing four-minute fanfare – here the brass struggle to keep rhythms tight – while the oldest and calmest piece is *Rusty Air in Carolina* (2006), its locusts and bush crickets marking the first time Bates used sampling as an orchestral instrument. *Desert Transport* (2010) incorporates the earthy singing of Arizona's Pima Indians: in the end, it's the oldest material that keeps the music rooted. **Kate Molleson**

Bruckner

Symphony No 5 (ed Nowak)

London Symphony Orchestra / Lance Friedel

MSR Classics ④ MS1600 (73' • DDD/DSD)



This first recording of a Bruckner symphony by the relatively unknown American conductor Lance Friedel is notable for not only having a world-class orchestra on

board but also for enjoying a multi-channel SACD release. One wonders about the economics of such a venture in these difficult times, the Fifth Symphony in particular being hardly the sort of work that engenders sales in large numbers.

Nevertheless, this is a notable and in many ways desirable addition to the Bruckner discography. Friedel's direction is direct and straightforward, with well-chosen tempi that keep *allegros* moving while allowing for contrast and repose. He also has the ability to sustain tension over long spans and to invest Bruckner's often extended climaxes with power and grandeur. If there are moments in the *Adagio* where a slightly greater degree of rapture and wonderment might be welcome, the finale is a major achievement and enjoys a rendition of the coda that is as thrilling as any on disc.

Little associated with Bruckner in previous decades, the London Symphony Orchestra has in recent years garnered considerable experience in the composer's music under conductors such as Bernard Haitink and Daniel Harding. Here they perform superbly for Friedel, delivering playing that is both sonorous and passionate, with violins placed antiphonally and inner voices eloquently articulated. What a pleasure it is to hear them in the spacious acoustic of All Hallows Church in Gospel Oak rather than in their constricted home acoustic of the Barbican Hall. The recording is quite superlative, combining exceptional transparency with a warm cushion of reverberation, neither muddy in climaxes nor opaque in quieter passages.

For those that are interested in such things, Friedel uses the 1951 Nowak edition of the score rather than the 2005 Cohrs update with its minor changes at the close of the *Adagio*. On the evidence of this recording, Friedel has real authority in the music of Bruckner and I look forward to hearing more of his performances.

Christian Hoskins

Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (ed Orel)

Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

Video director **Agnes Méth**

C Major Entertainment ④ DVD 733308;

④ 733404 (66' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Festspielhaus, Baden-Baden, May 24, 2015



I was struck while watching this latest instalment of Christian Thielemann's video Bruckner cycle how

much camera movement there is under Agnes Méth's direction. Sound and picture quality are exemplary, but it seems that every third shot involves the picture moving left or right, zooming in or out, floating over the orchestra as if suspended from a balloon or featuring a slow crossfade from one camera to another. To be fair, such techniques are common practice in video recordings of concerts these days and are indeed a feature of Méth's direction of the same symphony conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1996. It's not something that bothered me when watching the earlier concert, an engrossing performance under the 82-year-old Giulini's direction, but I found it somehow distracting when listening to Thielemann's new performance.

A further play of the disc without the visuals brought little additional satisfaction, however. Thielemann solicits playing of typical warmth and richness from the Dresden orchestra, the woodwinds in particular on fine form. Tempi are well chosen and steady in the outer movements, leading inexorably to a powerful presentation of the *Adagio's* dissonant climax, and there's no want of energy and bite in the Scherzo. At the same time, the performance gives the impression of being borne on a surface current far removed from the seismic cataclysms potentially occurring in the ocean depths far below. With none of the various completions of the symphony's finale being part of Thielemann's vision of the work, the *Adagio* concludes with an E major serenity that seems here a little too easily won. **Christian Hoskins**

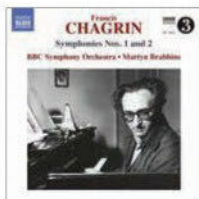
Selected comparison:

Stuttgart RSO, Giulini (6/05) (ARTH) DVD 101 065

Chagrin

Symphonies – No 1; No 2

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins
Naxos © 8 571371 (56' • DDD)



Born Alexander Paucker in Bucharest, Francis Chagrin (1905–1972) settled

first in Paris (where he studied with Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger) before moving permanently to London in 1936 (where he became a pupil of Mátyás Seiber). Three years later, he was appointed musical advisor and composer-in-chief to the BBC's French Service – a post he held with such distinction that the French government conferred upon him the award of Officier d'Académie. During

the war, he also founded the Society of the Promotion of New Music, which was supportive of (among many other important figures) Alwyn, Arnold, Bennett, Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies. As well as writing over 200 scores for the big and small screen, Chagrin left a sizeable output of concert works, including much chamber music, a Piano Concerto and the two symphonies recorded here.

Completed in 1959 and revised six years later, the First Symphony impresses by dint of its solid craftsmanship, tasteful restraint and enviable sense of purpose. The slow movement is especially eloquent, its outer portions having something of Roussel's angular lyricism about them, while both the scherzo and finale bring with them occasional echoes of Chagrin's film music. Towards the end the skies darken, the fretful mood momentarily banished by a glinting harp (a most effective touch). Like its predecessor, the Second Symphony is cast in four movements and clocks in at just over 28 minutes. Composed between 1965 and 1971, this proves another sinewy and rewarding utterance, skilfully orchestrated, uncompromisingly defiant in spirit and boasting (once again) a slow movement of bleak beauty. Certainly, collectors with a fondness for, say, Alan Rawsthorne, Lennox Berkeley, Arnold Cooke or Bernard Stevens should waste no time in investigating these two compositions of substance.

I can report that the BBC SO respond to the manner born under Martyn Brabbins's unfailingly lucid lead, and the recording is realistic and helpfully detailed to match. At Naxos price this bold issue is definitely worth seeking out. **Andrew Achenbach**

M-A Charpentier · Leclair · Rameau

'Comédie et Tragédie, Vol 2'

M-A Charpentier *Le malade imaginaire*, H495 –

Suite Leclair *Scylla et Glaucus*, Op 11 – Suite

Rameau *Les fêtes de Polymnie* – Suite

Tempesta di Mare / Gwyn Roberts, Richard Stone

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0810 (73' • DDD)



Vol 1 of Chandos's 'Comédie et Tragédie' series contained well-known pieces by Lully, Marais and Rebel. The music here is less familiar, as Julie Anne Sadie suggested might turn out to be the case in her review (11/15). But, as it happens, the complete *Scylla et Glaucus* was a recent Editor's Choice (Alpha, 2/16). The suite recorded here follows the sequence of the opera, from the French overture to the final 'Symphony to depict the

baying of the monsters'. In between are the dances – among them a stately Sarabande and Loure, and a flowing Gigue – and various instrumental airs. Leclair's orchestration is splendidly varied, the martial sound of trumpets and timpani offset by the cool wash of flutes and some virtuoso violin-writing. I particularly liked *Tempesta di Mare's* vigorous, spiky strings in the 'Air des silvains' and the 'Premier air de démons', the former sounding perfectly well without the tambourine added in the opera set.

The 10 numbers of the Charpentier are over in 12 minutes. *Le malade imaginaire* marked the end of his short-lived collaboration with Molière who, taking the role of Le Malade himself, collapsed at the fourth performance and died shortly afterwards. *Tempesta di Mare's* solo strings in the 'Premier air des Mores' give an idea of how the music would have sounded originally; elsewhere the sound is almost lush, with a theorbo to add zing to the bass-line. Like the Leclair, the suite from Rameau's *Les fêtes de Polymnie* plays for 30 minutes. And, likewise, a fine recent recording of the complete work appeared recently (Glossa, 4/15). There's a strikingly dissonant opening to the Overture; the pieces range from a busy 'Descente' in less than 30 seconds to a brisk Chaconne at nearly five minutes. Delightful music, delightfully played. **Richard Lawrence**

Dvořák · Schumann

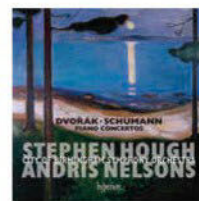
Dvořák Piano Concerto, Op 33 B63

Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54

Stephen Hough *pf* City of Birmingham

Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

Hyperion © CDA68099 (73' • DDD)



Some of Stephen Hough's greatest triumphs are to be found in Hyperion's wondrous Romantic Piano Concerto series. In a sense he has returned to that territory with the Dvořák Concerto, a work heinously neglected after it was condemned as being unpianistic. It was only when Sviatoslav Richter championed the original version that people realised what they had been missing. His recording with Carlos Kleiber remains a classic. There have been relatively few notable recordings since, though Francesco Piemontesi had the luxury of Jiří Bělohlávek and a BBC SO on fine form when he recorded this very coupling in 2012.

Andris Nelsons and the CBSO clearly relish the symphonic nature of the piece and their playing is one of the great pleasures



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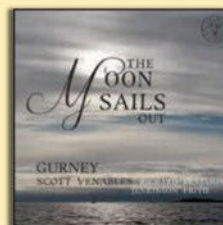
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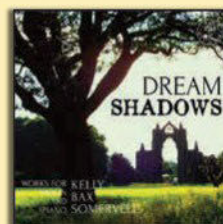
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Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)
Matthew Rickard (piano)

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here. The concerto's opening theme could be by no one else, though the mood soon darkens with a cautionary figure sounded first by violas and cellos. Nelsons imbues this with an affecting resignation, Kleiber sounding more openly disturbed. Hough enters the conversation with great subtlety and he's certainly unafraid to point out the score's lyrical beauties, allowing the music to unfold with suppleness without underplaying its drama or, where required, heft.

The glorious slow movement, which is launched by a *New World*-like horn solo, needs careful pacing: get it wrong and the question-and-answer writing can sound forced and overly sectionalised. Richter and Kleiber dare to take a slightly more drawn-out approach than this new recording, but both versions are compelling, and the CBSO players relish Dvořák's unfettered wind-writing. Another black spot is the *Risoluta* (tr 2, 3'31" on the new CD); in the wrong hands its accented motif – first in the major, then the minor – can sound trite but Hough gives it a playful quality, to which the orchestra gleefully respond. Another highlight is the very end of the slow movement, where the piano-writing ascends, drawing the orchestra up with it.

I slightly prefer Richter's way with the foot-stomping theme that opens the finale, which is superbly complemented by the earthiness of Kleiber's orchestra. Hough sounds just a tad deliberate by comparison (compared to Piemontesi too, who is fearless here). This is a hideously ungrateful movement for the pianist and Hough is remarkable in not having a note out of place. And he certainly brings the house down at the end, setting the seal on a performance that is full of panache.

From a work at the margins of the repertoire to one that is absolutely centre stage. The Schumann Concerto is, in Hough's hands, both boldly symphonic and utterly flexible, the pianist hardly making life easy for the conductor – though Nelsons is completely unfazed. The opening is strong and bold, adjectives that apply equally to the first movement's cadenza, which has grandeur as well as excitement. Sample tr 4 from 4'50" and this will give you a taster: Hough, first solo and then as chamber musician, is ravishing but also dangerously becalmed. But for me a bigger stumbling block is the way he turns Schumann's Intermezzo into something altogether more languorous (the stretched-out cello theme at 1'21" will give you an idea); just compare Shelley in this movement – to my mind pretty much unsurpassed among modern-day recordings. Symphonic breadth triumphs

over Mozartian lightness in the finale, yet that weight is offset by some superbly delicate figuration from Hough.

So a slightly mixed bag; but this version of the Dvořák should put it on the map for a new generation. Personal and heartfelt notes from Steven Isserlis and a superbly natural recording complete the package.

Harriet Smith

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Piemontesi, BBC SO, Bělohlávek (8/13) (NAIV) V5327

Dvořák – selected comparison:

Richter, Bavarian St Orch, C Kleiber

(9/77⁸, 11/98) (EMI) 566895-2

Schumann – selected comparison:

Shelley, Orch of Opera North (5/09) (CHAN) CHAN10509

Elgar · Vaughan Williams

Elgar Chanson de matin, Op 15 No 2.

Chanson de nuit, Op 15 No 1. In Moonlight (arr Milone). Introduction and Allegro, Op 47.

Salut d'amour, Op 12. Serenade, Op 20

Vaughan Williams Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. The Lark Ascending

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra /

Pinchas Zukerman *vn*

Decca © 478 9386DH (72' • DDD)



For readers of a certain age, *The Lark Ascending* may be the biggest draw here. Pinchas

Zukerman, long the starriest exponent of the work, first taped it with the English Chamber Orchestra as a favour to his friend Daniel Barenboim in 1973. More than 40 years later the stopwatch leads you to expect a more relaxed approach. In fact what's remarkable is just how little has changed. Readers who see the piece in terms of sunlit rapture rather than otherworldly transcendence will be well satisfied, not least because Zukerman's fabulous timbre remains a marvel, captured of course in more modern sound. As Edward Greenfield put it in his review of the earlier version, 'This is the lark singing in the heat of day'.

Despite his continuing prowess as an instrumentalist, Zukerman is more often to be seen on the podium these days. Currently the Royal Philharmonic's Principal Guest Conductor, he has been directing the orchestra since 2006 when his very first concert at Cadogan Hall, the band's London base and the recording venue here, included Elgar's Serenade for Strings. Tully Potter's booklet-note for the present issue traces a long-standing involvement with English repertoire and there's welcome warmth and naturalness in the music-making of a partnership previously undocumented on disc. The selection is generous too, with an

interlude of old-school favourites plus a novelty in the form of *In Moonlight*, an arrangement for solo viola, strings and harp of the 'Canto popolare' from *In the South*, in which Zukerman takes the solo part. He doesn't dawdle, which some will appreciate, though much is left unsaid.

The *Tallis Fantasia* may lack Barbirolli's fire, freedom and ecclesiastical acoustic, but when the Introduction and Allegro's resonant final cadence gives way to that throwaway pizzicato, Zukerman's more sonically focused players are at least helpfully unanimous. Their easeful affability has an eloquence of its own.

David Gutman

Lark Ascending – selected comparison:

Zukerman, ECO, Barenboim (4/75⁸) (DG) 439 529-2GG
or (ELOQ) 442 8333

Tallis Fantasia, Serenade, Introduction and Allegro – selected comparison:

Sinf of London, Barbirolli (5/63⁸) (WARN) 085187-2

Finzi

'Introit'

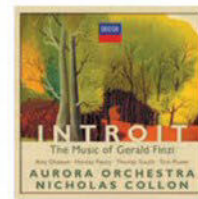
Clear and gentle stream. Come away, come away, Death^a. Dies natalis – Intrada; The Salutation^a. Introit^b. Eclogue^c. Fear no more the heat o' the sun^a. Lo! the full, final sacrifice – Amen^a. Love's Labours Lost – Three Soliloquies. Prelude, Op 25. Rollicum-Rorum^a. Romance, Op 11. A Severn Rhapsody. To Lizbie Brown^a. Who is Silvia?^d

^aAmy Dixon *saxs* ^dNicholas Fleury *hn*

^bThomas Gould *vn* ^cTom Poster *pf*

Aurora Orchestra / Nicholas Collon

Decca © 478 9357DH (77' • DDD)



This is an enticing package. You'd have to be a fairly diehard Anglophobe not to

be attracted to a new anthology of Finzi's shorter orchestral works, performed by one of Britain's smartest young orchestras and conducted by Nicholas Collon, who's already brought such clear-eyed vision to English music from Vaughan Williams to Jonathan Harvey. The artwork is beautiful, and with two youthful and widely admired soloists on board – pianist Tom Poster in the *Eclogue* and violinist Thomas Gould in the *Introit* – there's a lot here to enjoy.

Collon and the Aurora Orchestra play this music with genuine freshness. Phrases are expressively moulded, inner parts nurtured and long lines beautifully sustained, with a lively attention to detail that pays real dividends: the way, for instance, that the woodwinds and solo string lines gently come forwards then step back in the Three Soliloquies from *Love's*

Labour's Lost. And listen to the violins' ascent from 2'20" onwards in *A Severn Rhapsody* to hear just how much ardour these players can generate. The recording, made at the Fairfield Halls, is warm with a slight bloom that suits this music well.

Collon's soloists measure up well against the competition, too. Gould's *Introit* has more of a sense of conversation than Lesley Hatfield's equally fine Naxos account, and set against Piers Lane's recording with the ECO, there's an attractively inward quality to Poster's *Eclogue*. The Aurora Orchestra respond sensitively to each, and this feels like chamber music – a good sign in this most thoughtful of composers.

So what's the problem? The disc is padded out with bits of *Dies natalis*, torn from context, and a number of songs and other extracts, newly arranged for solo saxophone or horn plus strings. What were the Finzi Trust (who supported this recording) thinking? 'To aid wider appreciation', according to the blurb; in which case, why not spend the soloist budget on recording the real thing – the Clarinet Concerto, say?

The arrangements are tasteful, the soloists eloquent. But the supremely self-critical Finzi was intensely aware of the differences in texture and meaning between instrumental and vocal music. If you're one of those unenlightened souls who dismiss Finzi as a purveyor of generic 'smooth classics', these arrangements will do nothing to change your mind. A black mark against an otherwise commendable disc.

Richard Bratby

Introit, Severn Rhapsody, Soliloquies – selected comparison:

Northern Sinf. Griffiths (12/98) (NAXO) 8 553566

Eclogue – selected comparison:

Lane, ECO, Daniel (DECC) 473 719-2DH

Glazunov • Sibelius

Glazunov Violin Concerto, Op 82. *Raymonda* – Grand Adagio **Sibelius** Violin Concerto, Op 47. Suite, Op 117

Esther Yoo *vn*

Philharmonia Orchestra / **Vladimir Ashkenazy**
DG © 481 2157 (67' • DDD)



Only 22 this year, and two or three years younger than that when these recordings

were made, the American violinist Esther Yoo offers an impressive debut disc that will certainly sustain and possibly enhance interest in her career. Already well seasoned as a concert artist, she has all the technique and temperament one would expect of a competition finalist (fourth

prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2012), and she has chosen well – or been well advised – in her pairing of an established warhorse with an attractive Sibelian rarity, and with the Glazunov Concerto, which is not exactly neglected but certainly under-appreciated.

She brings great affection and even, perhaps, a touch of crusading zeal to the Glazunov, relishing its melting second theme and using her bright tone to good effect in the more energetic passages. Perhaps that tone is, at present, a little uniformly projected, the vibrato a little uniformly tight. That impression is certainly heightened by comparison with Nikolaj Znaider, whose Glazunov is far more colourful, touching and rhapsodic. In the Sibelius Concerto, too, Yoo does not as yet have the experience to relax her grip and explore darker recesses before returning to the fray with newly acquired wisdom.

For that kind of quality, it's a case of going back to the great masters. Not that starry names guaranteed top quality – Vengerov, for example, gives an overheated, self-conscious account of the Sibelius (Apex, 9/96). Even when it comes to Sibelius's Suite – a little treasure from his last years of composition that only resurfaced after his death – Yoo is less inside the music than, say, Dong-Suk Kang (in BIS's Sibelius Edition, where the piece is also better documented). The Grand Adagio from Glazunov's *Raymonda* is a welcome bonbon from a violinist whose future development should be well worth watching but for whom exposure on a label as prestigious as DG feels a little premature.

David Fanning

Glazunov Concerto – selected comparison:

Znaider, Bavarian RSO, Jansons

(6/02) (RCA) 74321 87454-2

Sibelius Suite – selected comparison:

Kang, Lahti SO, Vänskä (BIS) BIS-CD1921/3

Haydn

Horn Concerto, HobVIIId/3^a. Violin Concerto, HobVIIa/4^b. Keyboard Concertos – HobXVIII/4^c; HobXVIII/11^d. Concerto for Violin and Harpsichord, HobXVIII/6^e. Symphony No 83, 'Hen'^f. Fantasia, HobXVII/4^g

^a**Johannes Hinterholzer** *hn*

^{II}**Pomo d'Oro** / ^{bc}**Riccardo Minasi** *be/vn*,

^{def}**Maxim Emelyanychev** *cdeg/hpd*

Erato © 2564 60520-4 (126' • DDD)



No one can be sure that the G major Violin Concerto recorded here is

authentic Haydn. But with the composer's reputation growing apace in the late 1760s, the publisher Breitkopf was more than happy to market it as his in an age when musical styles were so generic. As with the similarly early Double Concerto (originally for violin and organ), the first two movements go agreeably, and unmemorably, through the *galant* motions. Things then liven up in the finales, which certainly *sound* like Haydn c1760. More consistently compelling are the slightly later Horn Concerto, with its gravely reflective *Adagio*, and the G major Harpsichord Concerto, whose entertaining finale is one of Haydn's earliest essays in the Tokay-flavoured gypsy style. A decade or so later, around 1780, Haydn riotously capped this finale in the famous *Rondo all'ungarese* of his D major Concerto, latest and finest of the concertos in this appealing mixed medley.

To ensure maximum sales, the D major Concerto was advertised as 'for harpsichord or fortepiano'. While the outer movements work equally well on either instrument, the rhapsodic *Adagio* surely gains from a touch-sensitive instrument. It's partly taste, of course, but to my ears Andreas Staier (playing on a period fortepiano), Leif Ove Andsnes and Marc-André Hamelin all distil more poetry and fantasy than the otherwise excellent Maxim Emelyanychev. And the riotously inventive solo Fantasia of 1789 is predicated on the dynamic and registral contrasts of the fortepiano. That said, Emelyanychev, using what sounds like a single-manual harpsichord, gives spruce, deftly timed accounts of both his solo concertos, shaping the *Adagio* of the G major with a vocal eloquence and bringing an infectious dash to the paprika-infused finales – and never mind the inauthentic pizzicato basses in the *Rondo all'ungarese*'s B minor episode.

The other concertos go well, too, even if Minasi's sweet and gracefully nuanced violin is recorded too closely in the Double Concerto. If Haydn really did compose the G major Concerto, he'd have been lucky to hear it dispatched with such mingled zest and delicacy. Johannes Hinterholzer is a refined, mellow-toned soloist in the Horn Concerto, spinning a beautiful sustained line in the *Adagio* (where the Pomo d'Oro strings lean into Haydn's dissonant suspensions), then relishing the comedy and virtuosity of the finale.

Directed by Maxim Emelyanychev, the spirited period band also give an enjoyable account of arguably the most popular, certainly the most eccentric, of Haydn's 'Paris' Symphonies. In the first movement, especially, I sometimes craved a weightier body of strings (the Paris orchestra of 1787



An impressive debut: Esther Yoo records Glazunov and Sibelius with the Philharmonia under Vladimir Ashkenazy

fielded over 40 strings, to Pomo d'Oro's 14). But the performance, trading on lean, faintly acerbic sonorities, is both sensitive and exciting. The developments of the outer movements generate a splendid vehemence, enhanced by keening oboes and rasping valveless horns, while the *Andante*, taken quite broadly, unfolds with a chamber-musical finesse (the orchestra's precise dynamic shading, down to a conspiratorial *ppp*, is crucial here). I find a harpsichord continuo in this music mildly irritating. And why, I wonder, does Emelyanychev iron out the dotted rhythms that close each half of the first movement to three straight crotchets? Is there a new edition involved? Puzzling, though not enough to prevent recommendation of a Haydn anthology spanning a quarter of a century, and the passage from promising journeyman to consummate master. **Richard Wigmore**

Keyboard Concerto No 11 – selected comparisons:

Staier, Freiburg Baroque Orch, Goltz

(4/05) (HARM) HMC90 1854

Andsnes, Norwegian CO (4/00) (EMI) 556960-2

Hamelin, Vns du Roy, Labadie (5/13) (HYPE) CDA67925

Ives

Symphonies – No 3, 'The Camp Meeting'; No 4^a.

Central Park in the Dark.

The Unanswered Question

Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot

Seattle Symphony Media © SSM1009 (72' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at the S Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, Benaroya Hall, Seattle,

January 29 & 31, 2015



Ludovic Morlot's pairing of the Third and Fourth Symphonies rolls

up months after Andrew Davis kicked off his Chandos cycle with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and with Litton and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Hyperion set rewinding through the memory. The detailed intimacy of his performance and sharpness of the recorded sound is immediately apparent, contrasting noticeably with Litton's curiously sexless and hazily impressionistic takes.

Ives's music is a counterpoint of simultaneously developing continuities against structural disjoints, a fact Litton soft-pedals but which Morlot makes the focus of his performance. From the start of the Fourth Symphony, the Seattle engineers raise the piano in the mix, its *basso profundo* low register punching above its weight as expressionistic strings swarm. And you begin to get an inkling of the symphony's vistas and perspectives: solo

strings, then flute, join the piano in invoking the chamber music sections of the *Concord Sonata* as the orchestra and chorus muscle up the volume. The second movement is especially fine, the ragtime rhythmic energy of the opening frogmarched towards thunderous burn-out as Morlot keeps subliminal details ticking over: the microtonal skid of a honky-tonk piano shyly peeks above the orchestral frame before dragging a solo violin into its orbit, all abruptly snuffed out by a loud-mouthed, raucous marching band.

If Morlot's Fourth Symphony is boldly modernistic and hot-blooded, leaving other recent contenders in the shade, his performance of the Third Symphony is too overtly Brahmsian for my taste – Bernstein's 1965 NYPO performance might not be the most elegantly played, but what poetic fantasy he communicates.

The two symphonies bookend *The Unanswered Question* and *Central Park in the Dark*, Morlot's hyper-misterioso performances reminding us that Ives originally paired the works together as *Two Contemplations*. David Gordon's trumpet is soulful and crooning in the first work; and the typically close-and-personal recording walks you deep inside the harmonic mists swirling around *Central Park in the Dark*.

Philip Clark



All human life: Jaap van Zweden marshals massed Dallas forces in Mahler's Third Symphony

Symphonies, Central Park – selected comparisons:

Dallas SO, Litton (11/06) (HYPE)

CDA67525, CDA67540 (oas)

Symphony No 2, Central Park, Unanswered Question – selected comparison:

Melbourne SO, A Davis (5/15, 2/16) (CHAN)

CHSA5152, CHSA5163 (oas)

Symphony No 3 – selected comparison:

New York PO, Bernstein (9/74⁸) (SONY) SMK60202

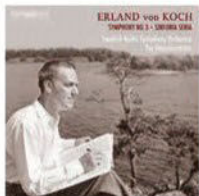
E von Koch

Symphonies – No 3, Op 28; No 4, 'Sinfonia seria', Op 51. Impulsi. Nordiskt capriccio, Op 26^a

Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Per Hammarström

BIS Ⓢ BIS2169 (63' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at Berwald Hall, Stockholm, May 2010



Erland von Koch (1910–2009) was very prolific in a composing career

lasting over eight decades. A number of his works have been recorded but not many have made a sustained impression outside Sweden; indeed, this is the first disc devoted to his music to be reviewed in these pages. I first encountered his music 40 years ago with Stig Westerberg's vibrant Swedish Radio recording (nla) of the wonderful *Nordic Capriccio* (1943), one

of my favourite shorter Nordic works, which the orchestra recorded again with B Tommy Andersson in 1998 for Phono Suecia (still available). Per Hammarström, in his first recording, secures a performance – recorded live in 2010 – that is if anything the tautest yet and wrings even more warmth from the lyrical second subject (based on a Dalecarlian folk tune).

Impulsi (1964) is the first instalment of the *Impulsi* Trilogy; the three movements – *Echoes* and *Rhythms* are the others – are performable separately. Westerberg recorded it in the 1970s for Swedish Society (still available, though usually as a download only). There's little to choose between Westerberg's and Hammarström's accounts but BIS's richer sound catches Koch's beautifully crafted sonorities with greater clarity.

The main part of the disc is given over to premiere recordings of the neo-classical Third and Fourth Symphonies. Koch regarded the latter, the *Sinfonia seria* (1952–53, rev 1962), as the most important of his six symphonies and its gravity is certainly impressively memorable – but then so is the *Adagio espressivo* slow movement of No 3 (1948). All four works are hugely attractive and idiomatically played, and I recommend this disc unreservedly.

Guy Rickards

Impulsi – comparative version:

Stockholm PO, Westerberg (SWED) SLT33259

Nordic Capriccio – comparative version:

Swedish RSO, Andersson (PHON) PSCD710

Lutosławski • Szymanowski

Lutosławski Livre pour orchestre. Musique funèbre **Szymanowski** Symphony No 2, Op 19 **Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Alexander Liebreich**

Accentus Ⓢ ACC30349 (65' • DDD)



A good deal of the impact of this excellent release is due to the splendidly

accommodating acoustic of the new NOSPR Concert Hall in Katowice, which on this evidence ought to provide a gold standard for anyone contemplating a hall of their own, be it newly built or newly renovated.

Szymanowski's radiantly effusive Second Symphony, a sort of Scriabin–Strauss synthesis with masses of seething counterpoint and very much a product of the *fin de siècle*, is the perfect acoustical test piece, what with its richly laced textures and extravagant climaxes, most particularly at roughly the 10-minute point in the first movement, where Alexander Liebreich inspires a cataclysm, the bass drum a virtual peal of thunder; on Valery Gergiev's LSO

recording, although the same episode is impressive (the movement timing is identical), the effect is tame by comparison. The very opening of the symphony resembles a violin concerto. Producer Paul Smaczny makes sure that although the soloist is cosily present, the woodwind backdrop is admirably clear, whereas the LSO alternative, although equally plush, isn't quite so meticulously balanced, as much due to Liebreich I'd imagine as to Smaczny.

Gergiev usefully gives us Szymanowski's First as a coupling whereas Liebreich offers two works by Lutosławski: *Livre pour orchestre* (1968), a concerto for orchestra in all but name, the first two movements – slithering string glissandos and burbling winds – more than enough to get you hooked. The solemn and atmospheric *Funeral Music* in memory of Bartók dates from 10 years earlier and in this context delivers a richer string profile and a less claustrophobic recorded balance than on Witold Rowicki's justly famous Warsaw National Philharmonic recording, although the performance is similarly intense. Altogether a superb programme. **Rob Cowan**

Szymanowski – selected comparison:

LSO, Gergiev (11/13) (LSOL) LSO0731

Lutosławski Musique funèbre – selected comparison:

Warsaw Nat PO, Rowicki (PHIL) ➔ 464 043-2

Mahler

Symphony No 3

Kelley O'Connor *mez* Children's Chorus of Greater Dallas; Women of the Dallas Symphony Chorus; Dallas Symphony Orchestra / Jaap van Zweden
DSO Live B ② DSOLIVE007 (96' • DDD • S/T/t)
Recorded live at Eugene McDermott Concert Hall, Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, May 21-23, 2015



The Third was the first of Mahler's symphonies to be recorded by Leonard

Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra back in the 1960s (I well remember Deryck Cooke's enthusiastic review in these very pages), and the irony does not escape me that Jaap van Zweden will soon be taking up his appointment as the new music director of that esteemed ensemble. His Mahler Third could hardly be more different from Bernstein's; and while comparisons are unavoidable, it is also perhaps a little unfortunate that the Bernstein account of this piece can surely lay claim to being the finest ever put on disc.

Technology, though, has moved on since then and first impressions of this

live recording from Dallas are more than favourable – a big open soundscape for an epic symphony. All nature – human and otherwise – is here, and nowhere in Mahler's output is the pantheist in his soul a cause for greater rejoicing. Indeed, in the outer movements it is quite overwhelming. The first is flabbergasting in sonic terms alone, and while van Zweden and the Dallas Symphony keep their grip on the bigger picture, the seismic shocks and upheavals (not least in the opening pages) are nothing like as startling or as arresting as they need to be. In general the sound is too blended, 'softened', for my taste and the raucous woodwind choir (in need of a little focus-pulling) are never as pungent as I'd like them in sections such as the notorious 'Rabble' episode, which sounds so orderly when you compare Bernstein or Manfred Honeck's recent account which, sonically speaking, is as good as it gets.

Van Zweden is also too impatient to fully appreciate those blinding vistas which open up at the culmination of summer's inexorable march on winter. When the moment returns in the coda he is again pressing forwards where surely there must be a moment of feeling transfixed by what we see (from what we hear) before the

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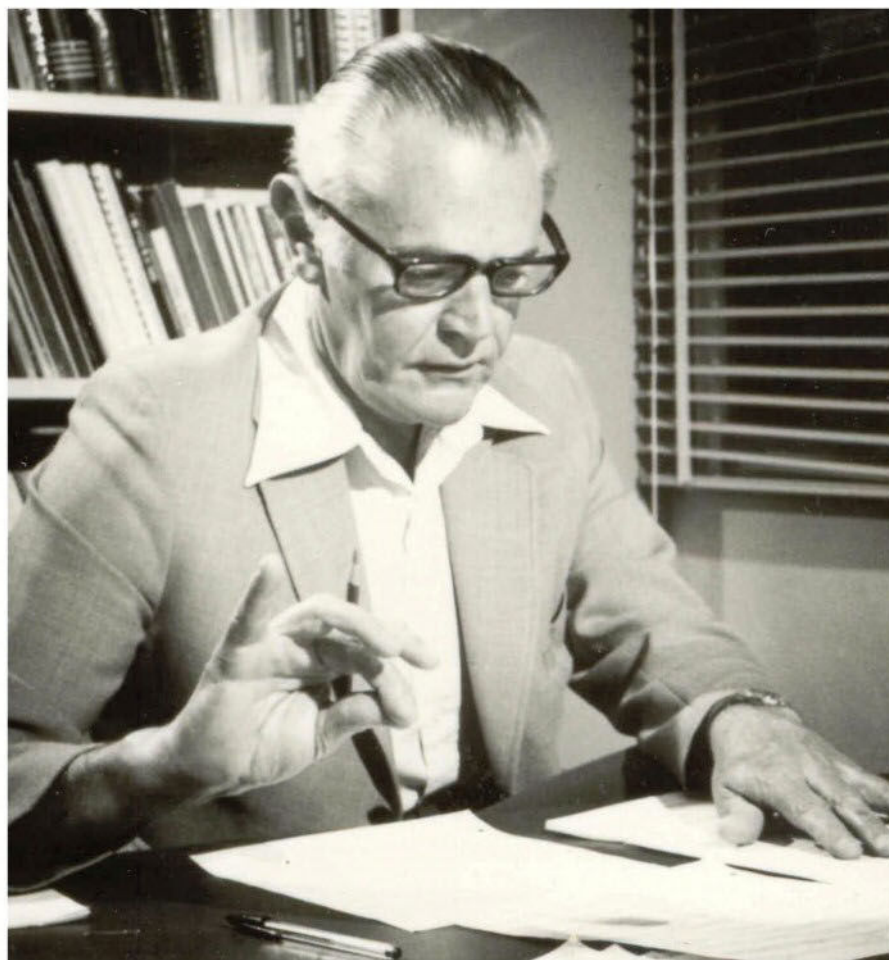
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Andrew Achenbach welcomes a selection of symphonies and choral works



Readily communicative: Peter Racine Fricker

Back in 1991, a superbly engineered coupling of **William Wordsworth's** Second and Third Symphonies (11/90) scooped a well-deserved *Gramophone* Award for Richard Itter's Lyrta Recorded Edition. Now comes a belated companion issue containing this figure's Symphonies Nos 1 and 5 from 1944 and 1960 respectively. Born in London, Wordsworth studied with Donald Tovey in Edinburgh, eventually making his home in the Scottish Highlands. Written while he was working on the land as a conscientious objector, the First of his eight symphonies proves a gritty, uncompromising statement which eventually claws its way to a grudgingly optimistic resolution. The Fifth is finer still, a three-movement canvas, whose affirmative spirit, intensity of expression and excitingly taut progress won conspicuous praise from Deryck

Cooke: 'It is a bold and fully organised symphonic drama, whose whole structure arises naturally from its questing initial theme; and its use of familiar gestures – in a brooding first movement, a disquieting scherzo and a finale of cumulative violence – carries complete conviction. The CD opens with the overture *Conflict*, dating from 1968 and in part a response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The performances by the BBC Scottish SO under James Loughran and (in Symphony No 5) Stewart Robertson are unfailingly sympathetic, and Itter's off-air tapes sound more than acceptable too.

Another British symphonist yet to receive his due is **Arnold Cooke** (1906–2005), a pupil of Hindemith who left us six essays in the medium. Lyrta couples Nos 4 and 5, the former a wonderfully cogent, readily assimilable and clean-cut creation commissioned by the Royal

Philharmonic Society and heard here in John Pritchard's communicative January 1975 world premiere with the BBC SO. The dashing *Allegro commodo* finale shares something of the exuberant joy of his teacher's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*. Cooke's Fifth Symphony dates from 1979 and employs a somewhat more expansive design, albeit still in the traditional four-movement form. The *Lento* slow movement acts as the work's emotional heart (and boasts some truly lovely woodwind-writing), while the captivating *Allegretto pastorale* trio section calls to mind some of the gentler pages of Hindemith's ballet *Nobilissima visione*. Bernard Keffe draws a lively response from the BBC Northern SO in a broadcast from July 1981, and the mono sound is seldom an obstacle to appreciation.

Each of the three remaining anthologies contains a substantial choral offering, the earliest being *The Bermudas* for baritone, chorus and orchestra by **Iain Hamilton** (1922–2000). This strikingly effective, partly serial cantata from 1956 culminates in a memorable setting of Andrew Marvell's eponymous 1654 poem. Baritone Ronald Morrison and Alexander Gibson's SNO cohorts do it proud, and it's followed by the challengingly spiky and intricately plotted Piano Concerto No 1 in its original guise from 1959–60 (Hamilton substantially overhauled the score in 1967). Dedicatee Margaret Kitchin is a fearless exponent in this vivid recording of the February 1961 premiere at a Glasgow Musica Viva concert with Gibson and the SNO. We also get Norman Del Mar's August 1965 Proms premiere with the BBC SO of *Cantos* for horn, tuba, harp and percussion, which brings eloquent solo contributions from Douglas Moore, John Fletcher and Sidonie Goossens.

Hamilton's colleague and friend **Anthony Milner** (1925–2002) is handsomely served by an impressive pairing under the expert baton of Meredith Davies devoted to his oratorio *The Water and the Fire* (1961) and *The Song of Akhenaten* (1954) for soprano and orchestra. First given at the 1964 Three Choirs Festival in Hereford, the former sets a wide-ranging text that (to quote the composer) 'narrates symbolically and allegorically the plight of man estranged

from God and his subsequent repentance and reconciliation, viewed in the context of Christ's Passion and Resurrection'. Lasting nearly an hour, this is arguably Milner's magnum opus, and the present, hugely dedicated display from BBC Manchester (aired in stereo on January 13, 1977) leaves the listener in no doubt as to his formidable powers of invention, strength of ambition and religious conviction. Soprano Janet Price shines in *The Song of Akhenaten*, which once again displays Milner's very real gift for word-setting. There's the occasional bout of tape damage in the oratorio to contend with but it's not enough to hamper enjoyment.

Peter Racine Fricker (1925-1990) wrote his large-scale *The Vision of Judgement* for the 1958 centenary of the Leeds Festival. Drawing upon words from the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon epic poem, Christ and the Latin Requiem, it's a splendidly imposing, readily communicative work, the huge forces required (including additional antiphonal brass, as in Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*) ensuring a veritable feast for the ears. This fervent October 1980 broadcast features Jane Manning (soprano) and Robert Tear (tenor), the Leeds Festival Chorus and RLPO under Sir Charles Groves. Fricker's Fifth Symphony for organ and orchestra constitutes another meaty essay, the idiom now rather more astringent, and there's no disputing the indefatigable commitment and skill of Colin Davis's May 1976 world premiere from the Royal Festival Hall with Gillian Weir and the BBC SO.

A final word of praise for Paul Conway's knowledgeable annotations – and the good news is that there are plenty more fascinating rarities in the Lyrita/Itter pipeline. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Wordsworth Symphonies Nos 1 & 5
Loughran, Robertson
Lyrita **REAM1121**



Cooke Symphonies Nos 4 & 5
Pritchard, Keeffe
Lyrita **REAM1123**



Hamilton The Bermudas, etc
Gibson, Del Mar et al
Lyrita **REAM1126**



Milner The Water and the Fire, etc
M Davies et al
Lyrita **REAM1125**



Fricker The Vision of Judgement, etc
Groves, C Davis et al
Lyrita **REAM1124**

euphoric *presto* of the closing bars again takes our breath away.

The assorted flora and fauna of the inner movements are well attended with fragrant and elegant playing (the closing page or two of the second movement especially) and the *lontano* effect of the distant posthorn solos in the third are suitably transfixing, carried on the gentle rustling of tremolando violins.

Personally I prefer a darker contralto sound than Kelley O'Connor gives us in the Nietzsche 'Midnight Song' setting and van Zweden is not mindful of Mahler's markings *Sehr langsam* and *Misterioso* (very slow; mysterious) – it is neither. But at least he doesn't subscribe to the view, fashionably held now, that Mahler's direction *Hinaufziehen* ('drawn upwards') for the oboe and cor anglais' semitonal bird cries should in fact be taken literally to mean an obtrusive and awkward-to-achieve slide. When that's what he wanted (as in the Ninth Symphony's Rondo-Burleske) he marked it as such.

Of all Mahler's *adagios* the final movement of the Third is surely the greatest – well, it is when you listen again to that first Bernstein recording. That has never been equalled in my opinion, though Chailly and Honeck are both beautiful and inspiring. Van Zweden falls short of what I would call that extra dimension: intensity, elevation. You somehow sense as trumpets and trombones quietly, heart-stoppingly begin the final ascent that van Zweden is not headed for that special place that Bernstein and Chailly so naturally access. He never quite attains the ascendancy. And the final pages, with their timpani ostinato, are too loud (marked only *forte*), as if seeking to encourage the cheers – which frankly is not what you want to hear at the end of this movement, indeed this symphony. **Edward Seckerson**

Selected comparisons:

New York PO, Bernstein (12/62) (DG) 427 328-2GH2,
477 5174GB6 or 459 080-2GX16

Royal Concertgebouw Orch, Chailly (8/04) (DECC)

475 5142DX2 or 475 6686DX12

Pittsburgh SO, Honeck (11/11) (EXTO) OVCL00450

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 20, K466; No 21, K467

Staatskapelle Dresden / Rudolf Buchbinder *pf*

Sony Classical **88875 17806-2 (55' • DDD)**

Recorded live at Volkswagen's 'Die Gläserne Manufaktur', Dresden, June 15-17, 2015



Rudolf Buchbinder offers the standard pairing of Mozart's two most popular

piano concertos: the stormy D minor (K466) and the C major (K467), once named *Elvira Madigan* after a slender Swedish film that used its slow movement on the soundtrack. He performs live with the Staatskapelle Dresden in 'Die Gläserne Manufaktur', a futuristic car factory. I'm sure the concerts from which these recordings were taken were splendid events but the reasons for issuing them on disc are unclear.

Buchbinder's piano is spotlighted in the mix to such a degree that it dominates the sound picture. Passages, notably in the D minor Concerto, in which the piano should provide a gentle rumble underpinning the orchestral *tutti* are skewed to such an extent as to undo the entire *raison d'être* of these works. We were all taught at college that Mozart perfected the keyboard concerto as a dialogue between the 'characters' of the piano and (especially) the woodwind, in a style not dissimilar to his operatic ensembles. Here Buchbinder comes over as the pub bore, shouting his opinions down the bar and obliterating the conversation.

Being live, there are some fluffs and some lumpy passagework which would have prompted a retake in studio conditions. The piano sound becomes insistent on isolated notes above the treble stave. Buchbinder is most persuasive in the cadenzas, though: the usual Beethoven in the D minor, his own in the C major. A visual record of the concerts, also preserving Mozart's final piano concerto, K595, is available (C Major Entertainment **DVD** 733908 or **Blu-ray** 734004). A *souvenir d'occasion*, perhaps, but little more.

David Threshier

Schubert • Shostakovich

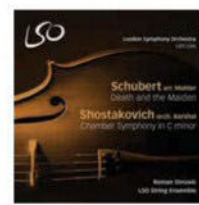
Schubert String Quartet No 14, 'Death and the Maiden', D810 (arr Mahler)

Shostakovich Chamber Symphony, Op 110a (String Quartet No 8, arr Barshai)

LSO String Ensemble / Roman Simovic

LSO Live **LSO0786 (66' • DDD/DSD)**

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, April 26, 2015



Following a debut disc pairing Tchaikovsky's Serenade with Bartók's Divertimento (1/15),

this latest offering from the LSO's elite string group again cuts across conventional couplings, immortalising two-thirds of a concert given a year ago. Both scores are dark and autobiographical, Mahler providing additional connective tissue as arranger of the Schubert and inspiration for Shostakovich's confessional vein.

While Rudolf Barshai gained acceptance for his Shostakovich transcription during

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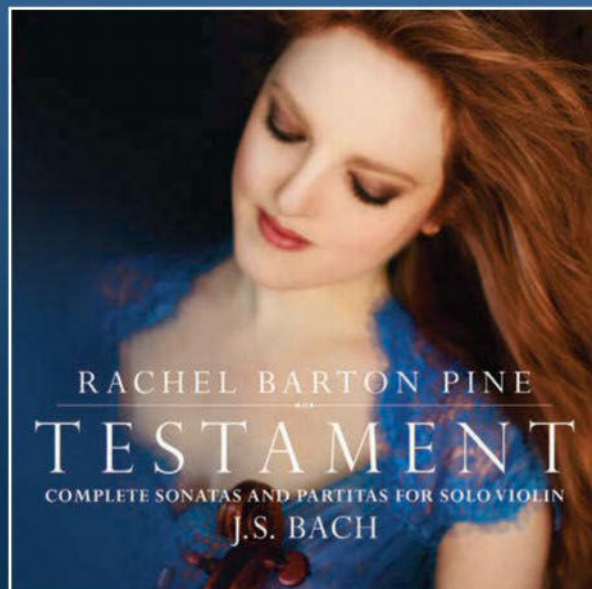
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the composer's lifetime, Mahler's only partly realised fleshing-out was not published until the 1980s, when David Matthews and Donald Mitchell were able to prepare definitive parts from the marked-up score unearthed by his daughter, Anna. The present performance is large in scale, retaining the first-movement exposition repeat and taking its time over the second's set of variations. There's no lack of character. Texturally, however, things feel somewhat desiccated. Whatever Mahler's expectations in terms of string vibrato, he would surely have deployed a larger body of players.

In the ubiquitous Chamber Symphony the LSO String Ensemble is up against groups of all sizes, many given a more flattering acoustic setting than London's Barbican Hall. On the plus side, the opening *Largo* is taken quite briskly, in which context the deadened, wispy sonority works well. The second movement's reprise of the Jewish-inflected dance from the Second Piano Trio rages full-bloodedly, with the spectral waltzing of the third assailed by comparably vigorous, stabbing interventions. Thereafter it's the recollection of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (broadly paced and beautifully played by Tim Hugh) which emerges as the heart of the piece, memorialising the composer's free-spirited, prematurely deceased first wife quite as much as his renewed sense of ideological confinement in the aftermath of a failed second marriage.

Roman Simovic has a tendency to launch phrases with a penetrating sniff but secures characterful and energetic results, the very occasional imprecision let through in the interests of emotional electricity. As usual for this label, all applause has been wiped.

David Gutman

Shostakovich – selected comparison:
COE, Barshai (12/05) (DG) 477 5442GTA2

Weber

'Complete Overtures'

Overtures to Abu Hassan, Euryanthe, Der Freischütz, Oberon, Peter Schmoll, Preciosa, Silvana and Turandot. Der Beherrscher der Geister, Op 27. Jubel-Ouvertüre, Op 59
WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Howard Griffiths
CPO © CPO777 831-2 (69' • DDD)



It might be easy to overlook this new CPO disc of all Weber's overtures.

But it would be a mistake to do so, for what we have here is a recording that will

have you tapping your toe along to this glorious music afresh. Howard Griffiths, the British conductor whose recent discography has consisted largely of lesser-known 19th-century works, brings thrillingly vibrant and lucid playing from Cologne's WDR Sinfonieorchester, which is captured in brilliantly clear and realistic sound by West German Radio's engineers.

Right from the very start the disc's virtues are apparent: the clarity with which one can hear the flutes shadowing the violins in the opening flourish of the *Beherrscher der Geister* Overture, for example, or the thrilling agility the cellos bring to their line half a minute in, or the skipping lightness to the contrapuntal passage starting at 2'45". It's worth noting that the sheer sound of the orchestral *tutti*s (the big chords ahead of the *Freischütz* Overture's final dash, at 7'40", for example) is also unusually exciting.

Griffiths, meanwhile, imbues each work with real urgency, which the orchestra match with virtuosity across the board (of many examples, sample the passage starting at 2'10" in the *Silvana* Overture), but, though the tempi are spruce, we never get any of the sense of hair-shirt stringency that I feel robs the music of warmth in the playing of the Tapiola Sinfonietta on the most recent rival collection. Nor is he ever afraid to broaden the tempo and take his time when it's required (as he does with the *Oberon* Overtures's big clarinet solo).

The wind-playing is characterful, with a twinkle in the eye of the oboe solos and a mixture of liveliness and mellifluousness from the principal clarinet. The brass-playing is also especially fine throughout. The trumpets are full of martial swagger (backed up by hard-sticked timps), while the horns are able to bray boisterously as well as pare their sound down beautifully: listen to how they manage to both blend and be individually audible in that litmus-test passage, the slow opening of the *Freischütz* Overture.

What makes the disc so enjoyable, perhaps, is the fact that each overture feels carefully characterised. The little *Turandot* and the *Abu Hassan* overtures are vivid in their naive orientalism (the latter complete with cheeky slides in the strings), for example, while few, I'd imagine, will be able to resist the sheer clamour and clatter Griffiths and his players bring to the introduction of the (British) National Anthem in the final pages of the *Jubel-Ouvertüre*. You might already have a favourite disc of Weber overtures, but I'd say this one demands to be heard.

Hugo Shirley

Overtures – selected comparison:
Tapiola Sinfonietta, Kantorow (BIS) BIS-SACD1760

Weiner

Ballad, Op 28^a. Csongor and Tünde, Op 10^b

^aMáté Szűcs *vs* ^bJubilante Girls Choir;

Budapest Symphony Orchestra / Valéria Csányi

Naxos © 8 573491 (66' • DDD)



During the first half of the 20th century Leó Weiner was a bigwig in Hungarian musical life,

especially as an educator. His students included Georg Solti, Fritz Reiner, János Starker and György Sebök, and while his compositions have been exported in dribs and drabs (his chamber music particularly), his orchestral works are hardly known.

The incidental music to *Csongor and Tünde*, based on a dramatic poem by the 19th-century writer Mihály Vörösmarty, started out as a 22-movement piece but was compressed to a nine-movement ballet; when the ballet was revived after the Second World War (by which time the Jewish Weiner was back in favour) it grew again, this time to 14 movements, which is what we have hear. There's a shorter sequence on Hungaroton played by the North Hungarian Symphony Orchestra under László Kovács but, good though that is, I think this version by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra is finer, not only because there's so much more music on offer, but because conductor Valéria Csányi shapes the score as if she really loves it, right from the opening movement, 'Prince Csongor and Mirigy the Witch', and in the third, 'Fairy's Dance and Mirigy', with its highly imaginative woodwind-writing. Think in terms of Glazunov's *The Seasons* transferred to Hungarian soil. There's much else in the score that is memorably dramatic: 'The Witch and the Temptress', or the 'Witches' Sabbath' for example (the latter with very effective brass and tam-tam); then again, for contrast, the gentle barcarolle 'Tünde triumphs over evil'.

One could quote many possible influences or parallels: in terms of Weiner's compatriots, Bartók of *The Wooden Prince* or perhaps Dohnányi; and beyond Hungary, Richard Strauss, even Roussel. It's a style that's ideal for conjuring up magic or fairy-tale fantasy, which is what this is. The disc's opening selection, a viola version of a Ballad for clarinet and orchestra, beautifully played by Máté Szűcs, blithely rhapsodises in the manner of the Eastern Romantics. All in all, a pleasurable experience, well recorded.

Rob Cowan

Csongor and Tünde – selected comparison:
North Hungarian SO, Miskolc, Kovács
(HUNG) HCD31740

Riccardo Chailly


'Music – A Journey for Life'

A film by Paul Smaczny

Grieg Piano Concerto, Op 16

Lars Vogt *pf*

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Accentus  ACC20254 (54' + 40' • NTSC • 16:9

• DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Beethoven • Mendelssohn

Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op 61^a

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Op 64^b

JS Bach Solo Violin Partitas: No 1, BWV1002 –

Sarabande^c; No 2, BWV1004 – Sarabande^d

Nikolaj Znaider *vn*

^{ab}Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra /

Riccardo Chailly

Accentus  ACC20345;  ACC10345

(85' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live, ^{bd}September 2012; ^{ac}October 2014



There's inevitably a slightly melancholy tinge to this pair of DVDs featuring Riccardo Chailly and the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, the orchestra he announced he was leaving – unexpectedly – in September last year. This is particularly the case with Paul Smaczny's gentle film 'Music – A Journey for Life', whose central episode consists of footage of Chailly rehearsing Mahler's Fifth Symphony with the venerable Leipzig band, interspersed with several of its members explaining why they enjoy working with him so much: they're 'a powerful animal,' says one, 'looking for a goal,' which is clearly what the conductor provides.

We cut to Mahler again at the close, with the final minutes of the Sixth Symphony, a carefully assembled piece of film-making that takes us from Chailly quietly studying and annotating the score, through moments of pre-concert ritual, to his arrival on stage. Then, as the credits arrive, we cut to disarming footage of the maestro negotiating a winding Alpine road on a moped to the strains of *La traviata*.

Smaczny's tone throughout seems to match his subject, who comes across as considered in conversation, patient in preparation and calmly authoritative on the podium; there's no mistaking the steely determination beneath the urbane surface, even if we don't ever see it explicitly.

A brief account of his early years under the shadow of his composer father leads to

footage of his own family life and mentions of important mentors, Abbado and Karajan among them (it was the latter who engineered his first concert with the Gewandhausorchester in 1986). Mahler in Leipzig, meanwhile, is contrasted with footage of Puccini in Valencia, where Chailly conducts *La bohème* and explains a perhaps unexpected parallel between the two composers as he sees them: both, he tells us, were in search of a special orchestral refinement.

At just 50 minutes, this is inevitably more of a sketch than a portrait, and it was produced before Chailly announced his move, although the slightly reverent booklet-note does discuss it. As a snapshot, though, it makes for fascinating, often charming viewing, and it gives a valuable insight into both Chailly's approach to what he conducts – he loves rehearsing, but always keeps something in reserve for performance – and what makes a successful relationship between orchestra and conductor.

As a bonus we have a performance of the Grieg Piano Concerto with Lars Vogt, a satisfyingly broad and rich account, featuring some gorgeous solo work from the orchestra, the principal horn in particular. Much the same virtues apply to the companion release of two more concertos, here featuring Nikolaj Znaider. A decade after the violinist released the same coupling of Beethoven and Mendelssohn on CD (RCA, 12/05), his interpretations (albeit filmed respectively two and four years ago) feel remarkably similar.

Znaider's Beethoven is almost impossibly sweet-toned and controlled. A premium is placed on poise and serenity, which certainly keeps the first and second movements hovering around a sublime plane. Whenever there's a hushed phrase, Znaider seems capable of repeating it in an even more whispered tone. The passagework is impeccably clean and controlled. Chailly keeps firm control over the structure, but some might miss a touch of steel in Znaider's approach, even if his accounts of the Kreisler cadenzas are a marvel of technique and musicality – the imitative double-stopped passage in that for the first movement is dispatched with astonishing cool.

The Mendelssohn is wonderfully fleet and fluid, and the concertos are followed by exquisite – if somewhat inevitable – solo Bach encores. Each serves as a further reminder of Leipzig's musical heritage, which Chailly's sojourn as the 19th Gewandhauskapellmeister has done a great deal to bring back into the spotlight.

Hugo Shirley

'British Clarinet Concertos, Vol 2'

Britten Movements for a Clarinet Concerto

(orch C Matthews) Cooke Clarinet Concerto No 1

Finzi Five Bagatelles, Op 23a (arr Ashmore)

Mathias Clarinet Concerto, Op 68

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Michael Collins *cl*

Chandos  CHAN10891 (83' • DDD)



Britten did not complete his projected Clarinet Concerto for Benny Goodman,

thanks to US customs seizing the manuscript of the first movement in 1942 believing it to contain coded messages. That sketch was first performed by Michael Collins in 1990, orchestrated by Colin Matthews, Britten's assistant in his latter years. Since then, Matthews has added two extra movements by arranging other Britten works. This was recorded by Collins (on NMC's excellent disc 'Unknown Britten') but gets a second recording here. The jazzy inflections in the outer movement go with a terrific swing, even if Collins was marginally tauter on his NMC account. There is great pathos in the central movement, based on the *Mazurka elegiaca* for two pianos, composed around the same period as the Goodman sketch. Matthews's arrangement is most skilful, having other woodwinds weave sinuously around Collins's silky clarinet.

The other arrangement here is Gerald Finzi's familiar quintet of Bagatelles, clothed in Lawrence Ashmore's saccharine arrangement for clarinet and string ensemble. The Prelude trips along nicely, while in the Romance Collins is more expansive than Robert Plane (Naxos), with beautifully veiled tone. The Fughetta – a real finger-breaker – has plenty of firm bite.

Arnold Cooke and William Mathias provide dips into unfamiliar repertoire. Both concertos were first performed by Gervase de Peyer but Collins is a worthy successor and gives persuasive accounts of both. The Cooke Concerto is especially notable for its lyrical, pastoral central movement, with its blackbird call, which Collins spins out as lovingly as Thea King (Hyperion). The finale, with its cross-rhythms and syncopations, is delightfully played. Mathias's Concerto plunges the listener straight into the drama and Collins responds with bags of personality. The percussion section of the BBC SO has a field day – glockenspiel, vibraphone and rototoms joining in the melee. An inventively packed programme – all

83 minutes of it – enthusiastically recommended. **Mark Pullinger**

Britten – comparative version:

Collins, Northern Sinf (A/09) (NMC) NMCD140

Finzi – selected comparison:

Plane, Northern Sinf, Griffiths (NAXO) 8 553566

Cooke – selected comparison:

King; Northwest CO, Seattle (3/82^R) (HYPE) CDA66031

'My Tribute to Yehudi Menuhin'

Bartók 44 Duos^a - No 28; No 35; No 36 **Elgar** Salut d'amour, Op 12^b **Ei-Khoury** Unfinished Journey^c **Enescu** Hora Unirii^d **Henze** Adagio adagio^e **Knümann** Rumänisch^f **Mendelssohn** Violin Concerto in D minor^c **Ravel** Kaddisch^d **Reich** Duet^g **Tavener** Song of the Angel^h **Vivaldi** Concerto for Two Violins and Strings, RV522^g **Daniel Hope** vn with ^h**Chen Reiss** sop ^a**Daniel Lozakovitj**, ^g**Simos Papanas** vns ^e**Christiane Stark** vc ^{bdef}**Jacques Ammon** pf ^f**Avi Avital** mandolin ^{cg}**Basel Chamber Orchestra**, ^{bf}members of the **Deutsches Kammerorchester Berlin** DG © 479 5305GH (75' • DDD)



Daniel Hope, in his own words, 'fell into Yehudi Menuhin's lap as a baby of two'. His

mother was the violinist's secretary and often took the young Hope to work with her. He grew up under Menuhin's eye, first performing with him on German television at the age of 11. It's the reason, says Hope, that he became a violinist. So this release, celebrating his mentor's 100th anniversary, is nothing if not authentic. All the repertoire has a connection to Menuhin, embracing everything from Baroque to contemporary classical music. The result is a showcase for his versatility.

Not to mention Hope's. This violinist, after all, has experimented with jazz, gypsy, klezmer, new music and raga, along with forgotten repertoire. Here he plunges in with Mendelssohn's lesser-known Violin Concerto in D minor, a piece that Menuhin resurrected in 1952. Written when the composer was just 13, it's unsurprisingly far from typically Mendelssohnian. The language clearly reveals his classical heritage and often comes across as quaint. That said, there are hints of a more mature style: in the tumultuous second-movement cadenza, for example, and the gypsy-ish finale. Hope and the Basel Chamber Orchestra strike a careful balance, stretching out the long-limbed lines but never to snapping point.

That balance occasionally eludes Vivaldi's Concerto for two violins and strings, which

prompts some over-indulgence from Hope and his partner Simos Papanas. Admittedly, Menuhin himself, who frequently accompanied his students in this piece, was no stranger to the sugar pot, and made no concession to historically informed practice; Hope, at least, does use a Baroque bow. Interestingly, though, he's at his most understated in the contemporary works: Tavener's *Song of the Angel* and Henze's *Adagio adagio*, where he revels in the music's mysterious half lights.

And he's at his most magnetic in the world of folk, which spotlights his particular blend of fire and refinement. It serves him well in excerpts from Bartók's 44 Duos, where he and violinist Daniel Lozakovitj allow the work's sophistication to shine through. But it leaves the deepest mark in Ravel's 'Kaddisch' from the *Deux Mélodies hébraïques*, a piece with particular significance for Hope: he played it as an encore after his last performance under Menuhin's baton. Judging from this haunting performance, it was a fitting farewell. **Hannah Nepil**

'Scherben'

Harvey Sringära Chaconne^a **Nunes** Chessed I^b **Poppe** Scherben^c **Saariaho** Notes on Light^d

^d**Dirk Wietheger** vc

Ensemble Musikfabrik / ^e**Stefan Asbury**,

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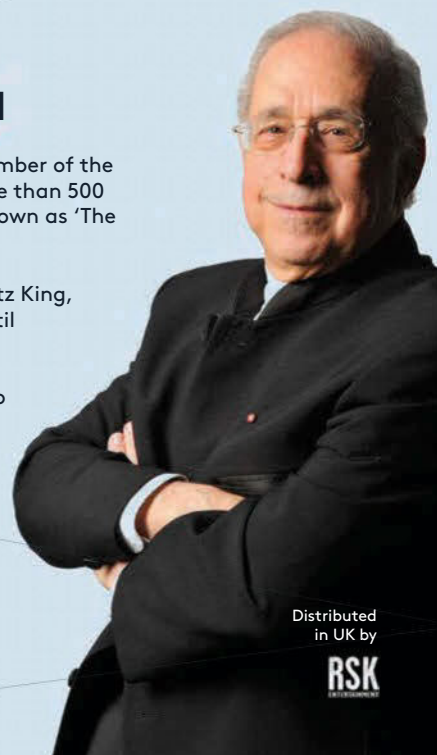
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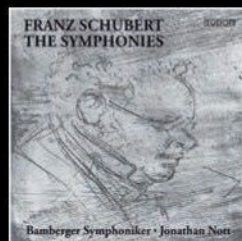
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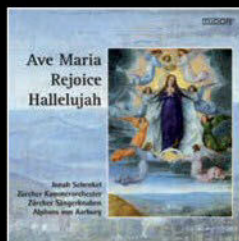
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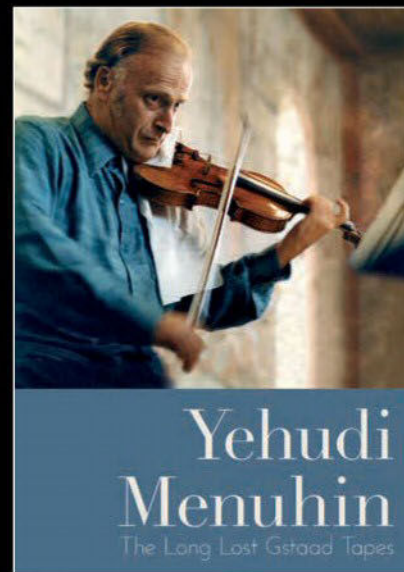
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^bSian Edwards, ^dEmilio Pomàrico, ^aPeter Rundel
Wergo © WER6862-2 (76' • DDD)



Jonathan Harvey's *Sringāra Chaconne* is a late work whose

exuberant balancing of sensuous and spiritual, Eastern and Western, sums up all that is most invigorating and accessible in his music. Written in 2008, when the opera *Wagner Dream* was still fresh in his mind, it effortlessly avoids modernistic clichés. It is also powerfully dramatic, moving with the kind of cumulative coherence found in memorable examples of the chaconne from Bach to Britten to reach its goal of a joyously uncluttered melodic line.

The title of *Notes on Light*, a concerto for cello and ensemble by Kaija Saariaho, suggests an emphasis on brightness and exuberance comparable to Harvey's. Yet it is not only twice the length but also a good deal weightier. Saariaho has no difficulty in sustaining such a large-scale design but the work risks seeming over-insistent in its vibrant assertion of emotional urgency; perhaps the performers could have offered more light as well as shade, and the recording have provided wider perspectives? Nevertheless, *Notes on Light* is an imposing example of contemporary music's capacity to allude to the Romantic tradition without falling into postmodern pastiche.

The disc takes its title – 'Scherben' ('shards' or 'fragments') – from Enno Poppe's 12-minute firework display, brilliantly dispatched by Musikfabrik but sounding almost flippantly spontaneous and improvisatory alongside its much more intense and strongly rooted companion pieces. Finally, with dense polyphonic clouds circulating restlessly and searchingly, Emmanuel Nunes's *Chessed I* seems to be questioning rather than affirming the mystical associations of the Hebrew term that provides its title. This is the only one of the four pieces in which complexity inhibits communication, at least in early listenings; with a recording that places you inside the action, *Chessed I* completes this rewarding disc with an uncompromising challenge. **Arnold Whittall**

'Russian Dances'

Glazunov Concert Waltzes – No 1, Op 47; No 2, Op 51 **Shostakovich** The Golden Age – Ballet Suite, Op 22 **Stravinsky** Circus Polka, composed for a young elephant **Tchaikovsky** Swan Lake – Suite, Op 20a

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada
Pentatone © PTC5186 557 (71' • DDD/DSD)



Swans, footballers and a baby elephant make for an unusual ballet troupe on this disc of

Russian dances. The Orchestre de la Suisse Romande boast a fine pedigree when it comes to Russian ballet. Ernest Ansermet, its founder, was a gifted interpreter of Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky, making many excellent recordings in the early days of stereo. Under Kazuki Yamada, the orchestra continues that tradition, though in weightier sound and weightier performances.

The eight-movement version of the suite from *Swan Lake* brings expansive playing and a firmer oboe tone than the somewhat vinegary sound in Ansermet's day. The lakeside pas de deux is a highlight, with glittering, nuanced harp (Notburga Puskas) and poetic violin and cello solos. Olivier Bombrun sparkles in the tricky cornet solo in the 'Danse napolitaine'. However, Ansermet leads more evocative accounts, with perkier cygnets and, in the Waltz, feathery strings lighter on their feet. Yamada is just a bit too flat-footed to compete with the best.

Composed before he'd tried his hand at ballet, Glazunov's two *Concert Waltzes* nod firmly in the direction of Tchaikovsky, the Russian master of the art. These are beguilingly played by the SRO, elegant and refined, blooming in the warm acoustic of Geneva's Victoria Hall, even if Ansermet brought them off with more élan.

Shostakovich was a great football fan, particularly of his home club Zenit St Petersburg. *The Golden Age* is a ballet that depicts a Soviet team's away match in an unspecified Western city during which a number of bizarre events occur. Yamada draws lovely playing in the tender *Adagio*, full of bittersweet strings and not a hint of parody or cynicism. Also included in the four-movement suite is a spiky polka, led by xylophone and winds, which is wonderfully cheeky.

Another fun polka concludes this enjoyable if random collection: the one Stravinsky wrote in 1942 for the Barnum & Bailey circus in which elephants performed in pink tutus. Combining heavy grotesquery with witty references – most notably Schubert's *Marche militaire* No 1 – this ballet for playful pachyderm ran and ran, receiving no fewer than 425 performances! **Mark Pullinger**

Swan Lake – selected comparison:

Suisse Romande Orch, Ansermet (DECC) 440 630-2DF2

Glazunov – selected comparison:

Suisse Romande Orch, Ansermet (ELOQ) ELQ480 0038

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Ondine update

Lars Vogt has just recorded a programme of shorter Schubert works for the Finnish label. The disc, due to be released in October, will include the Impromptus, D899, the *Moments musicaux* and a selection of *Deutsche Tänze*.

Olli Mustonen (pictured) is in the studio early in April to record Prokofiev's Fifth Piano Concerto with the **Finnish RSO** under **Hannu Lintu**. The disc, which will also include the Second Piano Concerto, will be released in 2017. The first disc in the survey, featuring Concertos Nos 1, 3 and 4, has already been recorded and will be released in September this year. The violinist

Benjamin Schmid has just recorded the Violin Concerto by Uuno Klami with the **Oulu Symphony Orchestra** under **Johannes Gustavsson**. This will be released in November, coupled with Einar England's concerto, which was recorded earlier.



• Mendelssohn debut

The **Fidelio Trio** will record their debut album with Resonus Classics this month in sessions at St John The Evangelist in Oxford. The disc, which is due for release in the autumn, will feature the Ravel Trio alongside Saint-Saëns's Piano Trio No 2 in E minor.

• Welsh celebration

Performing Grace Williams's *Missa Cambrensis* in Cardiff's St David's Hall seems a highly appropriate way to celebrate St David's Day. Only heard once before, in 1971, the Welsh composer's ambitious piece mixes the Latin Mass with interludes in Welsh. Former Archbishop of Canterbury – and indeed of Wales – **Rowan Williams** joins, as narrator, soloists including **Catherine Wyn Rogers**, **Tecwyn Evans** conducts the **BBC National Orchestra of Wales**. Lyrita recorded the performance for release in August.

Brahms's First Piano Concerto

Harriet Smith talks to Paul Lewis about the challenges set by this youthful masterpiece

Paul Lewis admits to something rather surprising, given that we have in front of us the score of Brahms's First Piano Concerto: a Brahms phobia. 'I only started performing the piece a couple of years ago, though I learnt it at school and came back to it every now and again. But because of this phobia – a sense of being aware of the craft of the composition without necessarily getting the musical message – I was never sure about whether I wanted to commit to it. Having said that, I never had doubts about this piece.' I can empathise, having myself only slowly come to appreciate Brahms (my aversion was a reaction to being force-fed the Fourth Symphony as a student). But happily for us, Lewis has now not only committed to the piece, but committed it to disc, with a live recording taken from two concerts with Daniel Harding and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra for Harmonia Mundi.

For something that's the ultimate young man's work, which Brahms unveiled to a bemused world as a 25-year-old, is there perhaps a danger of applying a metaphorical beard and interpreting it from the perspective of what came later? 'Yes. For me one of the main things is the sense of desperation in it, its drive. This is young man's Brahms – just think of the first note of the concerto – how much tension is it possible to have in a single note?'

Yet one of the things that's also striking about this great behemoth is the fact that in its 50-minute span there aren't actually that many *fortissimos* – much is either *pianissimo* or *piano*. 'That's true, but when there are climaxes, you shouldn't hold back. What we've got here is chamber music on the biggest imaginable scale, because the orchestra is in no way an accompanist and yet at the same time the piano isn't overly virtuosic.'

It has always seemed to me that the three-and-a-half minutes of orchestral *tutti* before the pianist enters must seem like an interminable wait, and then what Brahms asks is incredibly difficult, entering *piano* and *espressivo*. 'There are so many factors involved, and Brahms makes it clear that you can't have a lot of freedom because the orchestra doesn't stop. I think – now – that I prefer there to be a slowing-down before the piano comes in, and then to continue in that tempo. But getting the right sound in that first chord, that's another huge challenge.'

'There's a trend for thinking that one has to go to more and more extremes to convey anything at all. But in a piece



Paul Lewis overcame his Brahms phobia for this concerto

like this, you just have to trust in the power of the music itself; it's a matter of finding the right proportions so that the extremes, when they're there, are really obvious.'

Obviously that's true as you launch into the development, but moments such as the opening of the recapitulation, with that fleeting lurch into E major, equally has to make its effect, doesn't it? 'Yes, but if you overdo it you can end up sounding a bit pompous and bloated – there has to be a sense of driving through the entire first movement; anything you signpost has to be done very carefully.'

'The trills are another infamous element, and pianists do them in lots of different ways. With the powerful pianos we have these days, there are certain things one can do pianistically to make sure they project, but I don't see any need to rearrange them and it really grates when they're played aggressively.' He underlines the point with a witty caricature at the keyboard.

With Lewis's comments about not overdoing the extremes, it's no surprise that he steers clear of the sepulchral tone adopted by some in the slow movement, which Brahms



The historical view

JF Runciman

Saturday Review, London, December 3, 1898

'Of the two concertos, the one in D minor is distinctly less abominable than the other, but neither contains much genuine music. The usefulness on this occasion was that the pianist was permitted to show how excellent a football player he would make.'

Compton Mackenzie

Gramophone, July 1935

'It is difficult not to find in the exquisite *Adagio*...the expression of a man chastened by tragedy and strengthened by victory over the flesh...the music of the piano seems to rock gently like a boat upon the calm sea of the strings.'

Donald Francis Tovey

Essays in Musical Analysis, Vol 3 – Concertos (1936)

'With this work the genius of Brahms shook itself free alike from formalism and vagueness...the result was inevitably a classic concerto, but one of unprecedented tragic power.'

simply marks *Adagio*. 'For me, it has to flow, to have direction, but with a lot of patience – to suggest something timeless yet inevitable. That first chord is very difficult because it has to tell you everything straight away. Brahms wrote to Clara, saying this movement was a portrait of her. And though it's tender and heartfelt, there's also, for me, something untouchable about it – quite reverent in a way.'

He then points out something I'd never noticed: 'Take the opening and just look at the long notes in the violins and violas, discounting all the crotchets.' Revealed is the initial theme of the first movement, up a third. 'Because it's Brahms, you can believe that that's intentional. And something about the desperation of that movement, its unresolved quality, is just there in the subconscious.'

There are many pitfalls in this mighty score, particularly in a live recording, but Lewis has nothing but praise for the Swedish Radio players, the last chord of the slow movement, for instance: 'That can be a messy moment, but it was spot on every time'. Or another masterstroke – the entry of the timps in the penultimate bar of the *Adagio* (the only time they are heard in this movement) – 'Yes, they were a kind of "present shadow", which is how I think they need to sound.'

We talk of the similarities between the rondo of this work and that of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. 'There are many parallels in terms of structure, even down to where the fugue appears, but their characters are totally different. The


'Though it's tender and heartfelt, there's also something untouchable about it – quite reverent in a way' – Paul Lewis

fugue, for instance, in the Brahms is like a kind of conspiracy...? Not playful then? 'It becomes so with the winds, but I think at the start it's serious. That of Beethoven's Third is more defiant.'

And does Lewis find an element of the dance about this movement too? 'Yes, that's very important, though it's a stamping Hungarian kind of dance – there's nothing light about it. But in the movement as a whole, there's the same character of desperation that you get in the first movement, but here there's an even stronger sense of needing to escape from something: lots of upward-movement in the phrases – of the first theme and the second too. And that comes to a head in the passage beginning at bar 359 [the pianist's broken octave passage before the cadenza], where you keep coming back to this bass A, yet each time you strive to get a little bit further away from it. And then the cadenza is just the most extraordinary transition from that point. When you finally find D major, and the horns come in – well, dreadful cliché that it is – it really is the calm after the storm.'

As for the very end, Lewis admits to being pleasantly undecided about whether the 'tempo 1' marking (bar 518) refers back to the start of the movement or just a return to the speed you were at before the *molto accelerando*. 'It works really well either way: with Daniel, we do the latter, so it's quite fast; but with Mark Elder we returned to the tempo of the start of the last movement and that worked really well too. That's what great music gives you – the opportunity to rethink things all the time.' **G**


Paul Lewis's disc is released on April 15; see next issue for our review



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Chamber



Charlotte Gardner listens to a discs of rarities by Walter Rabl:

'Wenzel Fuchs, the Berlin Philharmonic's principal clarinet, is the star of the quartet with sublime, golden tone' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



Mark Pullinger reviews Emma Johnson's new Schubert Octet:

'There's vim and vigour about the first movement and the Andante's variations are amiably presented' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**

Bruckner Fock • Dohnányi • Zemlinsky

'Dämmerung'

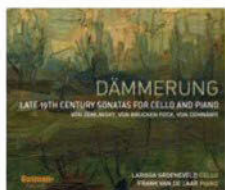
Bruckner Fock Cello Sonata

Dohnányi Cello Sonata, Op 8

Zemlinsky Cello Sonata. Drei Stücke

Larissa Groeneveld vc **Frank van de Laar** pf

Gutman Records (M) ② CD154 (82' • DDD)



It's a nice parallel that all the lesser-known sonatas on this disc, entitled

'Twilight', were written when their respective composers were still in their twenties, the heading referring to the era during which they were written.

Zemlinsky's characterful *Three Pieces* (1891) open the programme rather than any of the trumpeted sonatas, and this is a good move given that they pack far more of a musical punch than their diminutive size would suggest, particularly in Groeneveld and van der Laar's readings. The opening Humoresque is rather more solid and passionately full-blown than the impishly insouciant reading its title might suggest, but it works. The real triumph, though, is the Lied. Here Groeneveld tones herself down to a tender softness, although retaining the Humoresque's strength for the crescendos, and it's hard to imagine this tiny gem singing more under another cellist's fingertips. Close miking plays a part too, particularly in the final seconds when the bow leaves the string, the piano pedal is released and silence descends. It's the kind of weighted moment you expect more in a concert hall than on a studio recording such as this.

In terms of stylistic approach, the rest of the programme continues in kind. Zemlinsky's A minor Sonata brings more warm, predominantly smooth, expansive readings from Groeneveld, always in perfect communion with van der Laar, who for his part is generous with the pedal but never at the expense of definition. The close of Dohnányi's quirky scherzo has

a nice element of humour. Then, it's not clear whether musicologist Eric Matser, who discovered the little-known Dutch composer Gerard von Bruckner Fock's Sonata, is trying to do a hard sell or not when he describes the piece in the booklet as 'certainly one of the best written for cello and piano in the 19th century in the Netherlands', but the analysis feels about right. With a Brahmsian first movement and whispers of Beethoven across the rest, it's not going to set the world on fire, but this first recording of it is a thoroughly enjoyable listen, not least because it's beautifully played. **Charlotte Gardner**

Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Piano Quintets - No 1; No 2,

'Ricordi della campagna toscana'

Massimo Giuseppe Bianchi pf **Aron Quartet**

CPO (E) CPO777 961-2 (64' • DDD)



The story of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is tragically familiar.

Hailed as a bright young modernist in the 1920s, only to be forced into exile when Mussolini brought Italy's anti-Semitic laws into line with Hitler's, he found refuge – like so many of his generation – in Hollywood. Eventually he took US citizenship, but to read the names of his American pupils – John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, Henry Mancini – merely emphasises how completely (guitarists apart) we've forgotten his own warmly attractive music.

So this recording of his two piano quintets is overdue; in fact, although it isn't advertised as such, this appears to be the first time the Second Quintet has appeared on disc. They're big-hearted, expansive works, written in an idiom that Bax would have called brazenly romantic. The First dates from 1932 and is the more conventional in form, by turns tender and ardently lyrical. The Second, subtitled *Memories of the Tuscan Countryside*, is a product of the composer's post-war exile

in Beverley Hills. It's nostalgic, yes, but vibrantly alive: there's real imagination and colour, with echoes of modal harmony that might remind you of Respighi – plus a deliciously zesty folk-dance scherzo.

I wish I could be more enthusiastic about this recording. The Aron Quartet play with a commitment and sympathy that compensate for occasional roughness, and pianist Massimo Giuseppe Bianchi unleashes great cascades of tone at Castelnuovo-Tedesco's more grandiloquent climaxes. The problem is the boomy, fuzzy sound, which aggressively highlights the music's foreground while reducing the middles of textures to an undifferentiated mush. At times it sounds almost as if piano and strings are in different rooms. Add one of those CPO booklet-notes that reads like an MA thesis that has been fed through translation software, and this isn't perhaps the ideal introduction to two works that certainly deserve to be better known. But for now, at least, it's the only one. **Richard Bratby**

Frey

'Grizzana and Other Pieces'

Area of Three. Extended Circular Music No 8.

Ferne Farben. Fragile Balance. Lieues d'ombres.

Grizzana. A Memory of Perfection. Ombres exactes sans dureté. Petit fragment de paysage (four versions). Tendre enchaînement des valeurs

Ensemble Grizzana

Another Timbre (M) ② AT86 (155' • DDD)

Frey

'Circles and Landscapes'

Circular Music No 5. Extended Circular Music - No 2; No 9. In memoriam Cornelius Cardew.

Miniature in Five Parts. Pianist, Alone (2)

Philip Thomas pf

Another Timbre (E) AT91 (77' • DDD)



I listened to these two sets of instrumental and solo piano works by the Swiss



Beautifully played: Larissa Groeneveld and Frank van de Laar explore sonatas from the twilight years of Romanticism

composer Jürg Frey in instalments over the space of a week, and his music's capacity to linger – to evolve inside the inner ear once the sounds themselves have breathed their last – leaves a nourishing post-listening afterglow.

As a card-carrying member of the Wandelweiser composer collective, founded in 1992 to ponder those existentialist compositional questions raised by John Cage's *4'33"*, Frey's music privileges active listening over mere hearing. *Ferne Farben* ('Distant Colours', 2013) allows recordings of sounds captured from the environment licence to coexist alongside the blaring, turned-up quiet of glacially moving, hushed block chords scored for a characteristic Frey ensemble: flute, clarinet, organ, piano and string trio.

4'33" issued a reminder of the importance of environment – that music might just be the temporary frame we choose to place around the resonant harmonies and engine-room rhythms of real life, an idea that Frey has cunningly repurposed. Now the incidental hubbub, a genteel chorale of ambient breeze meets background babble punctuated by the occasional car horn, orchestrates and tints

the instrumental...music? In the listening, it's more as if Frey's field recordings exhibit the harmonic tension and release we would normally ascribe to music as those instrumental sounds disperse into the surrounding atmosphere.

Ferne Farben – philosophically and sonically – represents Frey at his most explicitly Cageian, but each piece has a deep mystery of its own to communicate. On Philip Thomas's disc of solo piano music, *Extended Circular Music No 9* (2014-15) is a harmonic synecdoche. Frey's harmonic sequences might evoke the over-ripe, ersatz Romanticism of a Broadway torch song or Barbra Streisand ballad, except that the transitional connective passing-note tissue has been removed and suddenly these overly familiar harmonic phrases are governed by outside rules. Chromatic notes sigh, but the harmonic cushioning rarely falls where you anticipate. Then this cycle of harmonic dependency is abruptly broken: a single, high-register line ruminates obsessively around a narrow bandwidth of intervals, through which the underlying overtone series of the piano floats into view.

Overly candied Frey is invariably a disaster and Thomas's deadpan distance feels absolutely right, a mood sustained throughout the standout *Area of Three* (2013). Reverberant cello drones set the scene as sustained interjections from piano, later clarinet, turn permutations like a harmonic Rubik's cube. But then the delicate knit falls apart. Dressed up grace notes have nowhere to go. Piano chords are abandoned in silence. And the less material Frey utilises, the harder you listen.

Philip Clark

Glazunov • Taneyev

Glazunov String Quintet, Op 39

Taneyev String Quintet No 1, Op 14

Gringolts Quartet with Christian Poltéra vc

BIS (P) BIS2177 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Taneyev and Glazunov were the two opposite extremes of their generation in Russia.

Taneyev was the stern artistic conscience of the Western-facing Moscow school, immersing himself in counterpoint and

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

TOUS LES MATINS DE MARAIS

Julie Anne Sadie listens to the latest additions to the French Baroque composer's rich discography



Harpsichordist Marie van Rhijn treats us to Marais's tragédie lyrique arrangements

This May marks the 360th anniversary of the birth of Marin Marais, said to have been the finest French viol player of his day, and who through his carefully notated solo and duo music (printed in five collections, 1686-1725) remains an inspiration to players today.

The Dolmetsch family were the first to record Marais's music (two musettes, c1933), but his international recording history properly began 60 years ago, in 1956, when the Swiss August Wenzinger recorded the first of several solo suites. The Austrian Nikolaus Harnoncourt followed in 1964 and then the Belgian Wieland Kuijken, joined by his brother Sigiswald in the first recording of Marais's *Tombeau de Monsieur de Meliton* for two bass viols.

The Chinese-American viol player John Hsu recorded the first set of LPs (1973-76), each devoted to one of Marais's five books of *Pièces de viole*, and then produced a six-volume critical edition of Marais's complete instrumental works (1980-2001). In 1976 the Catalan Jordi Savall joined the growing throng of Maraisians with an LP of *pièces* from Book 2 and quickly became for many Europe's pre-eminent exponent of French viol-playing.

The next generation of performers – who now recorded Marais on CD – were mainly pupils of Kuijken and Savall, including a number of French players, among them Jean-Louis Charbonnier (the first to record the complete *Pièces de viole* for Pierre Verany, an 18-year, 23-CD project finished in 2010), Christophe Coin, Sylvia Abramowicz, Sophie Watillon and Jérôme Hantaï.

The much-vaunted 1991 film *Tous les matins du monde* made Marin Marais and his teacher Sainte-Colombe household names, certainly in France. Sainte-Colombe's music for two equal bass viols had been known to players and scholars since 1976, when an edition and the first of two recordings by Kuijken and Savall appeared, but aside from Marais's masterpiece, the *Tombeau de Monsieur de Meliton*, most of his music for two bass viols contained in Book 1 (1686) was overlooked in favour of the solo *pièces*. After a rich seam of Sainte-Colombe recordings released in the decade after the film, Hantaï, with Kaori Uemura and Alix Verzier, collaborated on a lone disc of Marais and Forqueray *pièces* for two and three viols in 2000 (Virgin) that included the *Tombeau* and the G major Suite from Book 1. That is, until now.

Then, rather like London buses, three recordings of the same Book 1 suites for two bass viols (G major and D minor) have just been released, each worthy contenders for our attention. **Mieneke van der Velden** performs with her mentor **Wieland Kuijken**, who in 2013 had collaborated with Les Voix Humaines (Susie Napper and Margaret Little) on 'Ange Marais: Pièces à trois violes' (ATMA Classique), which covered later works. **Sylvia Abramowicz** (also a Kuijken protégée) plays with her American-born husband **Jonathan Dunford** (himself once a Savall pupil) and their lutenist son Thomas; they have also recorded works by Sainte-Colombe. Finally,

the Italian **Paolo Pandolfo**, who studied and later collaborated with Savall, includes both solo and duo repertoire from Book 1 in his musical portrait, 'Marais 1689'.

The many close connections between these players have resulted in a high level of consensus and continuity in the sounds they produce, their phrasing and ornamentation. There is a sublime perfection about the van der Velden/Kuijken 'Dialogues' that would seem hard to better, and yet the rapport achieved by the Dunford family is exceptional, conversational and often touching.

The third recording is less about the rapport between two equal players and more about the polished virtuoso Paolo Pandolfo himself. To the plucked accompaniment heard in the previous two discs he adds a harpsichord, which often blurs the delicate balance between the viols; and to Marais's bowing and ornaments he adds *enflés* and edgy, swaggering gestures that sound more like Forqueray than Marais. However, his deeply felt, visceral interpretation of the *Tombeau*, in which he is joined by his pupil Amélie Chemin, is a standout, and his interpretation of Marais's *Fantaisie en echo* superlative.

Enter **François Joubert-Caillet** (a Pandolfo pupil and duet partner of Kuijken in Schenk) and his ensemble L'Achéron in a taster disc of well-known Marais *pièces de viole* – among them two dances for two viols (the second part taken by Andreas Linos) from the same Book 1 suites – intended to advertise his project to record the complete works on Ricercar (20 CDs). Joubert-Caillet is a terrific player: the first three solo tracks are superb, but overall he is let down by the inclusion of too many continuo instruments and by Ricercar's engineers, who allows the ensemble to sound bottom-heavy and the acoustic smudgy by comparison with the clarity of the above-mentioned recordings, including Hantai's. It would be unfortunate if these features also were to characterise Joubert-Caillet's noble magnum opus.

As if more proof were needed that Marais is musically alive and well, the French harpsichordist **Marie van Rhijn** treats us to a recital of Marais's transcriptions of instrumental music from his first *tragédie lyrique*, *Alcide* (1693), made by a 'très habile homme', to which she adds a Sarabande arranged by d'Anglebert (d1691) and her own stylish arrangements of the B minor Suite from Book 2 (1701). Especially striking is the greater tunefulness, emotional depth and rhetorical eloquence, and richer harmonic language of Marais's *pièces de viole*, and van Rhijn's arrangements sit comfortably alongside the late-17th-century ones. The music Marais composed for *Alcide* – even in embellished solo versions – simply doesn't compare. Van Rhijn plays on a 1679 double-manual harpsichord by an unknown maker that is as wonderfully characterful as it is resonant. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Marais 'Dialogues'
van der Velden, W Kuijken, Jacobs
Ramée (RAM1407)



Marais Suites à deux violes
Dunford, Abramowicz, Dunford
Musica Ficta (MF8024)



Marais 'Marais 1689'
Pandolfo, Chemin, Boysen, Hünninger
Glossa (GCD920415)



Marais 'Pièces favorites'
Joubert-Caillet, L'Achéron
Ricercar (RIC364)



Marais 'Dans les jardins d'Eurytus'
van Rhijn
Evidence (EVCD019)

classical myth. Glazunov was the golden boy of the St Petersburg nationalists, heir to Rimsky-Korsakov's sense of instrumental colour and blessed with a seemingly bottomless well of lyrical melody.

So much for preconceptions. This attractive disc of string quintets from the Gringolts Quartet and (real luxury-casting, this) cellist Christian Poltéra finds Taneyev at his most melodically engaging and Glazunov at his most ideally proportioned. True, where Taneyev uses his extra cello to add depth and complexity to a muscular thematic argument, Glazunov stirs it into his already-sweet textures like double cream. But there's a balletic charm to the 10 variations that make up Taneyev's enormous (just shy of 20 minutes) finale; Glazunov, meanwhile, solves the problem of making his last movement 'go' with a freshness and verve that's by no means a given in his chamber music.

It helps that the Gringolts Quartet approach both works with such obvious affection. The Taneyev is up against the Martinů Quartet's recent account and here Ilya Gringolts's glowing tone and liquid grace score highly. Listen to the expressive but unaffected way he handles the little cadenza at the end of Var 5 (helpfully, BIS gives each variation its own track listing). Gringolts is never more than first among equals, however, and the Quintet's sunset coda is lovingly handled, the individual strands of the texture beautifully caught in BIS's warm, transparent sound.

Their Glazunov feels if anything even more intimate, with a way of lingering over the first movement's long, singing phrases that gives it a touchingly self-conscious quality. If it doesn't perhaps flow with quite the sense of forward momentum that the Nash Ensemble achieve, this is nonetheless true chamber-music playing, alert to Glazunov's jewel-box colours (the Scherzo is particularly delicious) and with a real feeling of give and take between five committed players. Aficionados of either composer will certainly want to hear this recording – and it would make a perfect entry point to the chamber music of Russia's Silver Age.

Richard Bratby

Glazunov – selected comparison:
Nash Ens (8/12) (ONYX) ONYX4067
Taneyev – selected comparison:
Martinů Qt (5/15) (SUPR) SU4176-2

Grieg · Sibelius · Thommessen

Grieg String Quartet, Op 27 Sibelius String Quartet, 'Voces intimae', Op 56 Thommessen String Quartet No 4, 'Felix Remix'

Engegård Quartet

BIS (BIS2101 (72' • DDD/DSD)



The quiet E minor chords that give Sibelius's *Voces intimae* its nickname

occur a minute and a half into the third movement of this new recording by the Engegård Quartet. As Sibelius directs, the four players drop to a whisper; but the Engegårds' cellist Jan Clemens Carlsen leans ever so slightly on his own double-stopped chord. It's just enough to darken the sound, to shift its emphasis. Five minutes later, in the movement's closing bars, the chords return; this time, though, it's the leader Arvid Engegård who brings out his line – and, in the subtlest possible way, suggests the distance that's been travelled since that first mysterious interruption.

It's a detail, but one that I think gets to the heart of this fine Norwegian quartet's approach to both major works on this disc. The Engegårds' ensemble sound is characterful and lit from within by Carlsen and viola player Juliet Jopling. Their performances – lucidly captured by the BIS engineers – live in the moment: they're colourful, fluently paced and feel entirely spontaneous. But the more you listen to them the more you begin to sense the intelligence and refinement, as well as the freshness, of these readings. To take another example, the droll little portamentos in Grieg's *Intermezzo* become great uproarious whoops in the movement's unbuttoned central section. The way has been prepared: it makes both expressive and structural sense.

Both these works create their own emotional atmosphere, and the Engegårds bring something of themselves to each – more up-front than the Coull Quartet in the Sibelius, more fiery in the Grieg than the Vertavo Quartet. They also include the first recording of *Felix Remix*, a Mendelssohn-inspired scherzo written for them by Olav Anton Thommessen and played at high voltage with crystalline precision. Quartet aficionados won't want to part with the Budapest Quartet – but those seeking the Grieg/Sibelius pairing in modern sound would be hard pressed to find better. **Richard Bratby**

Grieg, Sibelius – selected comparison:
Budapest Qt (4/95) (BIDD) LAB098
Grieg – selected comparison:
Vertavo Qt (11/00) (SIMA) PSC1201
Sibelius – selected comparison:
Coull Qt (9/10) (SOMM) SOMMCD096



Flautist Claudia Giottoli takes on the complete flute works of Giacinto Scelsi with musicians including pianist Raffaele D'Aniello (review on page 79)

Mendelssohn

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 49; No 2, Op 66

Fournier Trio

Resonus © RES10161 (59' • DDD)



Is it just me, or are piano trios getting younger? The Hamlet Trio, whose

Mendelssohn I reviewed a few months back (Channel Classics, 12/15), was a mere four years old at the time of recording; the Fournier is just a year older. Mind you, these are works that respond tremendously well to youthful élan, as witness the fabulous Fischer/Müller-Schott/Gilad interpretations, of which I never tire.

The Fournier have garnered a number of accolades and it's not difficult to hear why, for this is playing with a high level of finish to it. Even the scherzos have not a hair out of place. They reveal, above all, the elegance of Mendelssohn's writing – just sample the ardent duetting between violin and cello in the recapitulation of the first movement of the D minor No 1, or the piano's gentle introduction to the same work's *Andante*. Yet turn to the Florestan in the latter passage and you'll discover how much more Susan Tomes draws out of the music.

In terms of energy, I find the Fournier a touch too laid-back. Nowhere is there a sense of edginess, of playing with fire, that you find, for instance, in the C minor No 2's Scherzo in the hands of Fischer et al. And the opening movement of the same trio is rather blithe, rather than the troubled soul that others reveal more tellingly.

In the end, this seems a rather one-dimensional view of Mendelssohn, restricting him to the salon rather than giving voice to his wilder side. But if you like your Mendelssohn trios finely honed, this may do it for you. **Harriet Smith**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Florestan Trio (2/06) (HYPE) CDA67485

Fischer, Müller-Schott, Gilad

(10/06) (PENT) PTC5186 085

Rabl

Clarinet Quartet, Op 1^a. Fantasiestücke, Op 2^b.

Violin Sonata, Op 6

^aWenzel Fuchs cl Geneviève Laurenceau vn

^{ab}László Fenyő vc Oliver Triendl pf

CPO © CPO777 849-2 (72' • DDD)



Walter Rabl is barely a footnote entry to late-Romantic music, largely because after

a promising start as a composer – in 1896 his Clarinet Quartet won first prize in a Vienna composing competition chaired by Brahms – he ended up writing only a clutch of works before ceasing all such efforts, aged 30, to concentrate on conducting. As a result, there are few recordings of his music kicking about, and those musicians who do programme him tend to cherry-pick the Clarinet Quartet (admittedly the cream of this disc) and partner it with repertoire from other composers of the period. So all power to this foursome for sticking with Rabl throughout. It not only gives the punter a different offering, but their reading of the quartet is by far the most satisfying I've heard, and I wonder whether that's partly because they've fully signed up to Rabl in his wider context.

Rabl was certainly not an innovator. You don't get much impression of an individual voice from these works and in fact the first few bars of the quartet really could be Brahms. However, that shouldn't matter if you're simply up for some deftly crafted music of the Leipzig conservative school, particularly when it's done as well as it is here. Wenzel Fuchs, the Berlin Philharmonic's principal clarinet, is the star of the quartet with a sublime, golden tone that has you impatiently anticipating each new entry. Then as a foursome these

JOHANNES BRAHMS Piano Concerto no.1

Ballades op.10

Paul Lewis

Swedish Radio Symphony
Orchestra

Daniel Harding



HMC 902191

A renewal of forms

Too innovative for its time, Brahms's *Piano Concerto no.1*, premiered in Hanover in 1859, needed a few years to become established in the repertory. It is a work that redefines the norms of the genre. The traditional confrontation between virtuoso soloist and orchestra is bypassed in favour of a balanced treatment and a more 'symphonic' approach. The *Ballades op.10* too derive from the impetus towards a renewal of forms characteristic of the young Brahms's output.

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

ELECTRONIC RESONANCES

Philip Clark surveys a handful of discs of new music that seeks new relationships with its environment



Magnus Granberg's Baroque ensemble measures the depths and heights of nature

Generally, acoustic music requires environments, either adaptations of existing surroundings or bespoke concert halls, where performances can ring acoustically true; but all the music in this survey burrows sound out *from* environments real and imagined, using electronic processes and precision gizmos to instigate new relationships between music, sound and architectural space.

Patrick Higgins's *Bachanalia* moves Bach's music through the acoustic topography of a Lutheran church in Brooklyn, where vintage microphones reveal layers of ghost counterpoint freefalling around Bach's grand contrapuntal designs as Higgins's guitar echoes and reverberates through the building. **Richard Skelton's** *Memorious Earth* is a soundscape etched together from electronic stretching and mixing of instrumental improvisations recorded

during extended walks around the Cumbrian fell land where, until recently, Skelton lived. **Magnus Granberg's** *How Deep is the Ocean, How High is the Sky?* is music that devours its own history – a hybrid ensemble of Baroque instruments and electronics bury the source material hinted at by Granberg's title deep within its own structure. The discs by Roger Doyle and Alvin Lucier also play with memory and acoustic illusion; time now to put to bed those tired clichés about electronic composers in clinical electronic music studios extrapolating mathematical formulae into abstract sound patterns cold to the touch.

Granberg's *How Deep is the Ocean, How High is the Sky?* (2015) is a thing of considerable sonic beauty indeed, performed by an ensemble of 10 musicians (with the composer himself playing prepared piano), that unwinds

unobtrusively over 60 minutes like cat paws unravelling an intricate patch of knitting. And in common with all the music here, Granberg has not only composed the material; a piece-specific context in which sound can unfold has been designed from scratch.

The carefully tailored instrumentation of his ensemble – two bass recorders, chitarrone, Baroque violin, viola da gamba and spinet cohabiting alongside an analogue synthesiser and musicians doubling on miscellaneous electronics, percussion and objects – situates his piece in the faraway past and the forever future. Previous Granberg works have gorged on Dowland and Schubert songs as source material but this latest piece sieves out melodic threads, diced-up chord sequences and rhythmic hooks from an Irving Berlin classic *Tin Pan Alley* song – material which Granberg hands his musicians together with written prompts for how the music can procreate itself during performance through spontaneous decision-making and precisely shepherded improvisation. Electronics subliminally sigh and mumble as these 400-year-old instruments begin spinning their deep weave of linear creases that rotate around hidden axes; then these e-whispers speak in fully formed phrases, adding to a procession of lavish detail that rises to the surface before being discreetly tucked into the background.

And sound sourced electronically can prove very adept at defining such elusive and unknowable year-zero structures. Electronic sound need have no initial point of attack and can, in theory, be sustained indefinitely – at least until the fuses blow. Electronic pieces have the capacity to begin from absolute silence – or sound can simply fall into the room without any up-beat or other rhythmic point of departure. Skelton's 2015 *Memorious Earth* – available as a standalone download, or on CD as part of a package that includes a book co-authored with his partner Autumn Richardson of related poems – creates the conceit of beginning long before our ears chance upon it, which is appropriate given the glacial evolution of the land expanse with which the music is dealing. Over 40 minutes a grounding harmonic drone – like a plugged-in reimagining of the opening bars of *Also sprach Zarathustra* – surges forwards through time, very gradually accruing force and density. Harmonically, Skelton sculpts

in stacked – never overstacked – triads that refuse to progress like good tonal chords should. New harmonic blocks pack in as others are filtered away, a cyclic process that gives the music its cast-iron unity and harmonic integrity.

Granberg's and Skelton's music is caked in distinct strains of melancholy, as though their whole *raison d'être* for using electronics is to achieve a delicate balance between preserving, then transforming, the grain of the past. Mode's disc of music by **Alvin Lucier** takes a noticeably more objectified perspective on the base alchemy of sound, provoking Pythagorean physics into thrilling sonic life. Lucier's *Music for Pure Waves, Bass Drums and Acoustic Pendulums* (1980) sets up an acoustic domino effect: sine tones curve upwards, causing the skins of four bass drums to vibrate, which excites pendulums arranged in front of them into delirious rhythmic revelry.

Roger Doyle's *Time Machine* (2010-11) and Patrick Higgins's *Bachanalia* (2015) play with literal memory. Doyle builds stream-of-consciousness song structures, blending poignant messages left on his answerphone with motivically interlinked instrumental music, washes of electronic sound providing a bridge between the two. *Bachanalia* is all about our relationship to totemic Bach works such as his Third Violin Partita and *Jesu, joy of man's desiring* – which Higgins twists around themselves, familiar harmonic landmarks hallucinating on their own existence – and the Bourrée from First Lute Suite, which moves with bebop-like speed until it implodes. But even as Higgins (whose day job is as guitarist in the avant-rock group Zs) transforms Bach, the thing itself remains constantly present – resonating through the church and through the ages. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Higgins *Bachanalia*
Higgins
Telegraph Harp **Ⓢ** TH009



Skelton *Memorious Earth*
Corbel Stone Press **Ⓢ**
ISBN 978-0-9572121-7-6



Granberg *How Deep is the Ocean...*
Granberg et al
Another Timbre **Ⓢ** AT87



Lucier *Broken Line*
Trio Nexus
Mode **Ⓢ** MODE281



Doyle *Time Machine*
Doyle
Heresy **Ⓢ** HERESY017

musicians make for a beautifully mellifluous grouping, with some lovely tonal dovetailing as they pick up their entries from each other. The *Fantasiestücke* for piano trio is equally full of sensitive, colourful chamber playing, and the Sonata for violin and piano comes off just as successfully, Laurenceau and Triendl making the most of the virtuoso excitement in their respective parts.

Charlotte Gardner

Scelsi

'Complete Flute Music'

Hyxos^a. Suite^b. Quays. Rucke di Guck^c. Ko-Lho^d. Tetratkys. Krishna e Rada^d

Claudia Giotto *fl/picc/all*

^aPaolo Puliti *ob* ^bNatalia Benedetti *cl*

^dRaffaele D'Aniello *pf* ^aLeonardo Ramadori *perc*

Brilliant **Ⓢ** 95039 (71' • DDD)



The Scelsi conundrum is fully on display in this brightly recorded compilation of compositions involving the flute. The good news is that the most substantial item, the 24-minute *Tetratkys* (1959), is an excellent example of Scelsi's ability to work more expansively and allusively than in the kind of constrained yet intensely dramatic rhetoric heard here in *Ko-Lho* (1976) for flute and clarinet.

In *Ko-Lho* the two instruments seem to be struggling to achieve a modicum of independence while limiting their materials to the most basic elements of interval and rhythm. In *Tetratkys* the solo flute inhabits more rhapsodic, even Romantic regions – especially in the last of its four sections. Moreover, Scelsi almost entirely avoids that tendency to ramble in quasi-improvisatory style that appears in several of the disc's shorter pieces, such as *Hyxos* for flute, gongs and cowbells, where the vibrant punctuations of the percussion make the modal monodies they interrupt seem relatively bland. As for the trilogy for piccolo and oboe *Rucke di Guck* (the weird title refers to the cooing of doves in a Hans Andersen tale), the energy released in the duetting interactions risks sounding increasingly aimless even when the individual movements last less than four minutes.

The virtuosity of flautist Claudia Giotto is remarkable, and she provides useful annotations in the booklet, not deterred by what she describes as the music's 'lack of direction'. Such an alleged 'lack' is, inevitably, relative: in many ways, Scelsi's music is most appealing when it can be felt to move forward, as in *Tetratkys*, the jovial final movement of the Suite for flute and

clarinet or the late *Krishna e Rada* for flute and piano. Here this most enigmatic of composers speaks with an unaffectedly personal accent. **Arnold Whittall**

Schubert • Crusell

Crusell Concert Trio Schubert Octet, D803^a

Emma Johnson *cl* **Philip Gibbon** *bn*

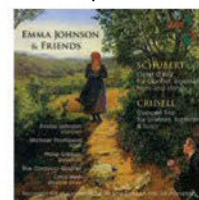
Michael Thompson *hn* ^a**Chris West** *db*

^a**The Carducci Quartet**

Somm Céleste **Ⓢ** SOMMCD0156 (75' • DDD)

Recorded live at Turner Sims Concert Hall,

Southampton, October 11, 2014



The spirit of the Schubertiade is easily felt in performances of his Octet: such a

convivial, good-humoured work. It was commissioned by Count Ferdinand von Troyer, an amateur clarinetist, and thus the clarinet often steps into the limelight during its six movements. This makes it a natural vehicle for star clarinetists to gather an ensemble for performances. From Wigmore Hall, we had 'Michael Collins and Friends' luxuriating in a gorgeous performance. Now 'Emma Johnson and Friends' appear on Somm, recorded in concert at Southampton's Turner Sims.

Live recordings can capture a special spirit but they can also expose flaws where a second take may be desirable. Johnson and Friends give an enjoyable account which I'm sure I'd have warmed to in the hall, but for repeated listening it's not quite polished enough. I find Johnson's tone rather nasal, with a rustic quality to the articulation in the bouncing *Allegro vivace* third movement. I also find The Carducci Quartet's wiry sound (great for Shostakovich) too aggressive for Schubert.

However, there's a good deal of vim and vigour about the first movement's *Allegro*, the *Andante*'s variations are amiably presented and there's a welcome sense of edgy tension at the outset of the finale. But when set alongside Collins and Friends in the mellower acoustic of Wigmore Hall, this new release pales in comparison as a friendly but poorer relation. Johnson, Philip Gibbon and Michael Thompson offer Crusell's Concert Trio (from the same concert) as a pleasant filler, with a nice sense of interplay and humour. **Mark Pullinger**

Schubert – selected comparison:

Collins et al (12/07) (WIGM) WHLIVE0017

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qobuz

Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Peter Quantrill celebrates a conductor, now 84, whose passion for the new and the unusual has crossed styles and borders, making him a favourite with audiences and orchestras alike

Coined half-affectionately by English musicians and then adopted by audiences, 'Noddy' is the nickname, thanks to the name and the cherry-red nose. Adopting it here would be easier on the eye – and the word-count – but swinging round at the end of William Walton's First Symphony to do 'jazz hands' at the audience does not make Gennady Rozhdestvensky a joke musician. 'One of the last great individualistic maestros of our age' (David Gutman) is nearer the mark. For his former assistant, Vladimir Jurowski, he was 'an idol'.

Rozhdestvensky was born in 1931 into a family of professional musicians. His father Nikolai Anosov conducted the first complete recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 2, with Tatiana Nikolaeva, at a time when the abridged Siloti edition was the expected norm. Such a spirit of adventure was something that his son would emulate. Having begun to study conducting at the age of 14, Rozhdestvensky was in the pit of the Bolshoi six years later for performances of *The Sleeping Beauty*. He toured with the company to London in 1956, and after another decade was appointed Musical Director of the ballet company. The hundreds of ballet performances and thousands of hours of rehearsal with dancers have made him a conducting animal whose entire body is put at the service of the score and the musicians he needs to coach. In this respect he is more similar to Karajan and Ozawa than to the young conductors of extravagant gestures whom he may superficially resemble. Arms twirled above the head and a two-foot-long baton are no more than physical, practically motivated manifestations of a style nurtured by theatre. At a BBC Prom in 1990 he seemed to conduct the 'Dignare' of Berlioz's *Te Deum* by

crumpling imaginary sheets of paper then throwing them in the bin – and it worked.

In Bruno Monsaingeon's film portrait of 2005 (11/08) Rozhdestvensky took an entirely pragmatic attitude to conducting: as a profession requiring him to take the part of benevolent dictator. His quick and efficient rehearsal methods were what first impressed the BBC Symphony Orchestra when, after protracted political negotiation, he became its Chief Conductor in 1978. 'The point of rehearsal is to put together the concert,' he remarked to Monsaingeon, 'not to give the concert. The concert brings with it an emotional intensity that couldn't, and shouldn't, be there beforehand, and I like to keep back a bit of improvisation on the night.'

Restless intellectual curiosity, a hunger to learn, even impatience; and a performative imagination schooled in dance, fantasy and rigour: these are the touchstones of his conducting,

brought together with an unerring feeling for the pace and sweep of ballet scores, exemplified by Prokofiev's complete *Cinderella* (Moscow Radio SO, 11/68) and *The Stone Flower* (Bolshoi, also on Melodiya). His special intimacy with *The Sleeping Beauty* was documented on a set made to mark the 50th anniversary of the BBCSO (9/80, and the associated concert on BBC Legends, 12/02).

Evgeny Svetlanov liked to claim he had the widest repertoire of any conductor, but his prolific record centred on Russian and Soviet music, whereas Rozhdestvensky has never recognised borders to good music, and has given countless composers a first (and more importantly second) public hearing. 'My passion,' he could still say in 2008, 'is to do work I've never done before.' Polishing icons of sound is not for Rozhdestvensky.

Rozhdestvensky has never recognised borders to good music, and has given countless composers a first public hearing

DEFINING MOMENTS

• **1951** – *An already experienced conductor takes the podium*
Debut with the Bolshoi Ballet in *The Sleeping Beauty*

• **1971** – *A notable first appearance in the UK*
Debut at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, in *Boris Godunov* with Boris Christoff. He 'kept a tight hold on the score... very much shaping scenes as coherent wholes.' (Alan Blyth, *Opera*)

• **1974** – *A champion of new music*
Gives first performance in Gorky of Schnittke's First Symphony, a choreographed, hour-long polystylistic riot dedicated to him. He subsequently recorded the work for Melodiya and Chandos. Schnittke: 'I could even say that nearly all my own work as a composer depended on contact with him and on the many talks we had. I count that as one of the luckiest circumstances of my life.'

• **2000-01** – *A return to the Bolshoi goes wrong*
A brief, ill-starred tenure as Artistic Director of the Bolshoi, from which he resigns after giving the first complete performances of Prokofiev's *The Gambler*.

• **2013** – *His cross-border appetite remains as strong as ever*
Conducts 'Foggy Albion', a nine-concert series of English music. Moscow audiences heard a Tippett symphony cycle, ballets of Bax and Bliss, and Lambert's *Rio Grande*, among much else.



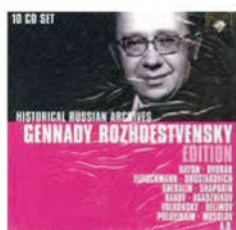
PHOTOGRAPHY: LEBRECHT MUSIC AND ARTS PHOTO LIBRARY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

In his chosen tenures – the USSR Ministry of Culture SO, Stockholm PO and BBCSO principal among them – he took the liberty of programming offered by state-sponsored institutions without the administrative and commercial responsibilities incumbent upon most of his colleagues. Temperamentally a free radical, he has resigned from posts and cancelled concerts citing lack of respect or appreciation on the part of local management and press.

Though a discography of 800-plus works reflects his breadth of interests, it is patchily available and not often blessed with the hi-fi engineering underwritten by major labels. His Bruckner cycle of all the editions then available may now be of academic interest, but the symphonies of Prokofiev, Roussel, Sibelius, Schnittke and Vaughan Williams are essential listening not for interpretative revelation or novelty but to marvel at a subversively balletic approach to symphonic

structures where the narrative line is paramount. Shostakovich finds him in his element, especially the circus and cemetery of the Fourth Symphony, which has been an unlikely business card down the years. Explaining the work's genesis in a pre-concert talk to a Chicago Symphony audience, he played sketches on the piano, quoted Mayakovsky on smelting the ore of inspiration and detonated legends of 'the composer effortlessly gathering his material, seated at an elegant Bechstein or open landau, surrounded by charming ladies, penning sketches of delightful tunes as they float unbidden in his head – or etching an immortal melody on the frozen windowpane of a country villa, while the infernal howling of a blizzard modulates imperceptibly into the sound of a symphony orchestra'. Or as a former member of the Boston SO put it, 'He is loads of fun. He is also an exceptionally fine conductor.' **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Shostakovich
Symphony No 4
Gennady Rozhdestvensky Edition
Brilliant Classics
(4/10)

Instrumental



Lindsay Kemp listens to Jean Rondeau's new recital, *Vertigo*:

'His booklet-note reveals a strong visual imagination which likes to link these pieces to their operatic alter egos' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 91](#)



Jeremy Nicholas on a fine second volume of overture transcriptions:

'Here's a good old-fashioned town hall organ recital of the kind that had people queuing round the block' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 95](#)

JS Bach

JS Bach Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, BWV903. Concerto in D minor, BWV974 (after Marcello). English Suite No 3, BWV808. Partita No 4, BWV828. Toccata, BWV911
JS Bach/Busoni Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639. Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist, BWV667. Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, BWV659 **JS Bach/Hess** Jesu, joy of man's desiring **JS Bach/Siloti** Prelude, BWV535

Nelson Freire pf

Decca © 478 8449DH (82' • DDD)



This, Nelson Freire's first disc devoted to Bach, is predictably personal. It speaks of

long acquaintance with the works on offer and you only need to sample the Fourth Partita's Sarabande to hear how lovingly he caresses the music, giving it a raptness that rivals Perahia. But there's playfulness too, as witness the Menuet of the same work, and its Gigue has plenty of energy and exuberance while offering in its conception something slightly shaggier than Levit's honed leonine energy.

Freire gives the opening Prelude of the Third *English Suite* a compelling urgency, compared to which Anderszewski lollops along. Swings and roundabouts, though, as the latter's magnificently profound Sarabande is difficult to equal. Freire's Gavottes, however, have a delicious spring in their step and he imbues the closing Gigue with energy yet a pleasing solidity too. If the C minor Toccata doesn't quite have the febrile quality of Argerich's masterly vision, in its place is a vivid sense of its arching architecture married to a simplicity of utterance, the final fugue dispatched with complete inevitability. Again, in the *Chromatic Fantasia* there are plenty more superficially brilliant accounts around, but few could match Freire in the Fugue, which is rich in tints and hues in his hands.

The remainder of the disc is devoted to arrangements, which suit Freire's brand of

pianism particularly well. Whether in the quiet solemnity of Bach's own adaptation of the *Adagio* from Marcello's D minor Oboe Concerto, the tolling depths of Busoni's arrangement of *Ich ruf zu dir* or the majestic *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, there's a rightness to everything he does. And to end, where else but the timeless Bach/Hess *Jesu, joy?* Joy indeed in Freire's hands. **Harriet Smith**

Partita No 4 – selected comparisons:

Perahia (7/08) (SONY) 88697 40083-2

Levit (10/14) (SONY) 88843 03682-2

English Suite No 3 – selected comparison:

Anderszewski (2/15) (WARN) 2564 62193-9

Toccata, BWV911 – selected comparison:

Argerich (4/80®, A/00) (DG) 463 604-2G0R

JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Markku Luolajan-Mikkola vc

Linn © 2 CKD548 (158' • DDD)



To pin down the specific problems of this perplexing recording of JS Bach's

Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin transcribed for cello, it is difficult to know where to begin. The reassignment of keys is one starting point, though: the D minor Second Partita in particular is hugely compromised in its presentation in G minor (Bach's own specification for each suite was done with his characteristic precision). The very specific sound of unisons and open strings that Bach would have sought to exploit are noticeably and painfully absent. Similarly, the stretching intervals that constitute the Prelude of the C major Third Sonata become darker and more introverted the wider they become in F major, rather than overwhelming the listener with the sense of light that gradually breaks out when they sit properly in their original key. Furthermore, it is hard to know whether Phantasm's viol-playing Markku Luolajan-Mikkola is finding the cello too cumbersome an

instrument to manage Bach's nimble melodies or whether he is simply trying to treat the cello like a violin; but the phrasing and articulation are laboured in a way that leave the unavoidable impression that the cello is simply the wrong instrument for these pieces.

All these points, though, are secondary to the serious tuning issues that prevent any first impressions burgeoning into anything deeper. The frantic skittering around the strings in the fast movements, often resulting in actual mistakes (such as in the Presto of the B minor First Partita, played here in E minor), and lugubrious overworking of broad phrases in the slow movements (the Sarabande of the same suite) both result in painfully strained intonation, which with the weight of Mikkola's dark, heavy cello sound forms a corrosive combination that constantly threatens to suffocate the music. The sequences of chord progressions leading up to the cadences are not sufficiently well tuned even to convey the sense that the tuning of the rest of the movement has in some way been for effect, or part of a harmonic journey. In other words, they don't act in any way other than to confirm a creeping sense that this disc does little to sell the exciting arena of historically informed performance. **Caroline Gill**

JS Bach

'Cello Suites, Vol 2'

Solo Cello Suites – No 2, BWV1008;

No 5, BWV1011; No 6, BWV1012

Joachim Eijlander vc

Navis © NC15007 (76' • DDD)



Joachim Eijlander's first volume of Bach's Cello Suites (9/15) was a meticulous

albeit slightly bland reading which bore all the hallmarks of the start of a dependable if uncontroversial set. That the second shows less of that precision, with no compensating greater overall musical interest, is a



Nelson Freire: 'a rightness to everything he does' on his first disc devoted solely to Bach

disappointment. There is similarly close miking here, although the intimacy is forced a little more than last time by the slapping of fingers on fingerboard that was more sparingly present and used to more subtle effect in the first volume. There is also very little variation in character between each suite. As a result Eijlander misses a lot of the inherent wit in Bach's writing, without which these works can – and do – become a relentless wall of sound. This is particularly notable in the Courante of the C minor Fifth Suite, where his echoing of phrases is so foursquare as to make them sound as if they were totally unrelated; it's all strangely humourless as a result.

Interestingly, the Sixth Suite is the least anodyne of the three here. Eijlander doesn't use a piccolo cello and as a result the momentum of the phrasing feels more substantial than it does in performances made light by the very particular personality of the five-string instrument for which Bach wrote the suite. At the start of the Prelude there is real promise that the slightly slower-than-expected speed and weight of sound will yield something truly joyful, but sadly that beauty is hampered by the slightly sour tuning (a fault present throughout the

movement, as well as surprisingly frequently elsewhere), two-dimensional phrasing and occasionally unusual grouping of semiquavers that confusingly undermines their sense.

Unlike the second volume of Ditta Rohmann's precise and understated recording (Hungaroton, 11/14) – whose aesthetic, on the basis of his first volume, was what Eijlander was going for – there is no sense of a completion here but instead one of a mismatch. The character and rough-hewn finish of this final volume is hard to relate to the finesse of the first.

Caroline Gill

Bartók

Three Burlesques, Sz47. Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs, Sz71. Mikrokosmos, Sz107 – Book 6. Out of Doors, Sz81. Suite, Op 14 Sz62

Cédric Tiberghien *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68123 (78' • DDD)



Alfred Brendel has written that, in contrast with a number of composers, Bartók's scores are notated with the

'utmost precision'. No doubt practical considerations influenced Bartók's uncommon sensitivity towards the page. The ancient folksongs that permeated his mature creative imagination sounded, even to his Hungarian contemporaries, wildly exotic; their accurate transmission required painstaking care. Now, seven decades after his death, these meticulous scores, especially when consulted alongside Bartók's own incomparable piano recordings, comprise an unusually rich resource for any musician intent on representing his music convincingly.

The French pianist Cédric Tiberghien shows himself a keen observer of Bartók's intentions in this varied programme of works dating from 1912 up through to the composer's departure for America in 1939. One of the most remarkable aspects of Tiberghien's interpretations is that they are refreshingly free of those aggressive attacks that used to pass for 'Bartók style'. He never overplays, yet there's ample dynamic variety, scrupulous attention to articulation and plenty of rhythmic verve. Tiberghien combines intellectual objectivity with a strong sense of Bartók's deeply rooted kinaesthetic impulse and essential earthiness.



DUTTON EPOCH NEW RELEASE



2016 commemorates 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare, and three magnificent orchestral works based on two of the Bard's plays (*Othello* and *Henry V*) and one of his most memorable characters (*Falstaff*) are featured in this release

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Fat Knight

Orchestral suite from opera *Sir John in Love*
Realised from Vaughan Williams's two-piano score
by Martin Yates (2015)

Henry V Overture

Orchestrated by Martin Yates (2015)

Serenade to Music*

Orchestral version

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Martin Yates (conductor)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS. * EXCEPT



CDLX 7328 ▶

Sergei Bortkiewicz

Violin Concerto in D minor op.22

Symphonic poem after Shakespeare's

Othello op.19

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Martin Yates (conductor)

Sergey Levitin (violin)

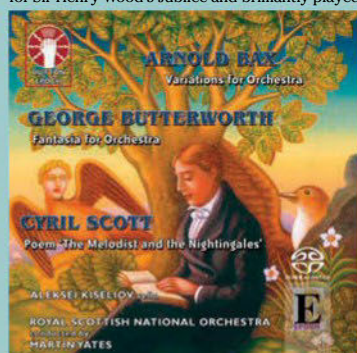
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS



CDLX 7323 ▶

Vaughan Williams never completed in full score his seven-movement suite from the opera *Sir John in Love*, which had as its central character Shakespeare's Falstaff. He left it in two-piano score with the opera's working title *Fat Knight*, and it has become, in effect, a set of instructions for realising the orchestral suite Martin Yates has produced, incorporating the orchestration from the completed opera. The *Henry V Overture*, until now only known in the original version for band, is recorded in Martin Yates's idiomatic orchestration, reminding us that Vaughan Williams produced a vivid evocation of the world of Shakespeare's play that anticipated Walton's more familiar film music of a decade later. Completing the programme is the orchestral version of the *Serenade to Music*, composed for Sir Henry Wood's Jubilee and brilliantly played here by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

In exploring worthwhile but forgotten Russian repertoire, violinist Sergey Levitin's brilliant and expressive playing brings us Sergei Bortkiewicz's expansive Violin Concerto in D minor, full of Romantic ardour in the Grand Manner. Bortkiewicz came from a privileged background, but the political turmoil of Russia and Europe in the twentieth century saw him twice made homeless and finally settling in Austria. The Violin Concerto is coupled with the ambitious half-hour Symphonic poem *Othello*, a vivid and compelling musical tapestry encapsulating the essence of Shakespeare's tragedy, in which Desdemona's theme – a warmly harmonised melody for strings – is strongly reminiscent of Tchaikovsky.



GEORGE BUTTERWORTH

Fantasia for Orchestra

Concert version realised and completed by Martin Yates (2015)

CYRIL SCOTT

'The Melodist and the Nightingales' for cello and orchestra

ARNOLD BAX

Variations for Orchestra

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Martin Yates (conductor)

Aleksei Kiseliov (cello)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

◀ CDLX 7326



Walter Braunfels VOL.3

Don Gil von den grünen Hosen:

Vorspiel op.35/1

Tänze und Melodien: Suite aus der Oper

Don Gil von den grünen Hosen op.35/2

Konzertstück in cis-Moll

für Klavier und Orchester op.64

Die Taubenhochzeit aus der Oper

Die Vögel op.30 no.2*

Serenade op.20*

BBC Concert ORCHESTRA

Johannes Wildner (conductor)

Piers Lane (piano)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS. * EXCEPT

◀ CDLX 7327

George Butterworth's *Fantasia* dates from the year of his death, 1916. Before being sent to fight in France he destroyed several manuscripts, but left intact some 93 bars of full score of the *Fantasia* from which conductor Martin Yates has realised and completed this lyrical and deeply moving performing edition. Aleksei Kiseliov is eloquent in his championship of Cyril Scott's *The Melodist and the Nightingales*, an atmospheric cello reverie, while Arnold Bax's earliest orchestral work, *Variations for Orchestra*, unheard for over a hundred years, is a gorgeously melodic score showing the young composer to be remarkably skilful in his handling of the orchestra.

CECIL ARMSTRONG GIBBS

Crossings – suite for orchestra Op.20

The Enchanted Wood Op.25

A Vision of Night Op.38

Dusk Op.82 No.3*

Original orchestral version

Suite in A for violin and orchestra Op.101

The Cat and the Wedding Cake

from the television operetta *Mr. Cornelius*

Four Orchestral Dances

BBC Concert ORCHESTRA

Ronald Corp (conductor)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS. * EXCEPT

CDLX 7324 ▶



Witold Maliszewski

Symphony no.3 in C minor op.14

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Piano Concerto in B flat minor op.27

FIRST DIGITAL RECORDING

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Martin Yates (conductor)

Peter Donohoe (piano)



CDLX 7325 ▶

This varied selection of tuneful but largely unfamiliar orchestral music by Cecil Armstrong Gibbs includes the delightful suite from his collaboration with Walter de la Mare, the 'fairy play' *Crossings*. Gibbs's music is very much an escapist art, full of charming tunes – as exemplified by *The Enchanted Wood*, which the composer described as "a dance phantasy," and the full orchestral version of his most popular work, the haunting slow waltz *Dusk*. In a similar light music vein are the attractive *The Cat and the Wedding Cake* (from the TV operetta *Mr. Cornelius*) and *Four Orchestral Dances*, written for a BBC Light Music Festival. In contrast are the Symphonic poem *A Vision of Night*, which reflects Gibbs's enthusiasm for the new music at the Diaghilev ballet, and the neo-classical *Suite in A for violin and orchestra*.

Witold Maliszewski (b.1873) died in 1939 and thus his musical career spanned the great days of pre-Revolutionary Russia as well as the Soviet Union before the Second World War. He became associated with the publisher Belaieff and thus with a wide constituency of Russian composers including Cui, Lyadov, Scriabin, Taneyev and Glazunov. In this vibrant and colourful programme, Martin Yates and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra present gripping performances of the Third Symphony – a major Russian nationalist symphony – and the Piano Concerto in B flat minor. Pianist Peter Donohoe's magisterial performance in the concerto shows him to be a powerful advocate of Maliszewski's music.

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Markku Luolajan-Mikkola: tackles Bach's Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas on a cello from c1700 by Barak Norman (review on page 82)

Individual pieces within the Op 14 Suite, *Out of Doors* and the Three Burlesques are presented as integral elements of a cohesive whole. The same may be said of the sixth book of *Mikrokosmos*, played here in its entirety and with great finesse. Tiberghien creates a line that builds inexorably from the deliciously atmospheric early pieces up through *Ostinato* and *March* to the extrovert *Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*.

Understandably, the least persuasive performance is of the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, which are direct transcriptions of folk material. In 1940, when Boosey & Hawkes took over the copyright of the set from Universal Edition, they omitted the flyleaf table which gave the tune, text and source of each song (I don't know if this has been restored in the 2006 edition). For some approximation of the original prosody, non-Hungarian speakers were forced to seek out either Bartók's original field recordings or the few excerpts he recorded on the piano. The original Hungarian flavours of this splendid suite are illustrated in the very different recordings of Bartók's pupil Lili Kraus (Vanguard), and of Zoltán Kocsis (Decca, 5/00).

That said, Tiberghien is clearly a committed Bartók player, whose fresh ideas

are remarkably consistent with the letter and spirit of the Hungarian master. I look forward to hearing more from him – perhaps even a First Piano Concerto?

Patrick Rucker

Beethoven/Liszt

Symphony No 9, Op 125 5464/9

Yury Martynov *pf*

Alpha © ALPHA227 (71' • DDD)



With this release, Yury Martynov wraps up his traversal of Liszt's transcriptions of all nine Beethoven symphonies, the first complete set to use historical instruments (an 1837 Erard and a Blüthner, c1867). In many ways, Martynov's wide experience with a variety of historical keyboards and styles made him ideally suited to so ambitious a project. But what seems especially striking is that the high standards established with the first instalment in 2012 have not been maintained but surpassed.

Appropriately, Martynov saved the most challenging of these dauntingly difficult transcriptions for last. As did Liszt himself, who had produced a superb two-piano

transcription of the Ninth, a work he often conducted, as early as 1851. Thereafter, despite the entreaties of his publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, Liszt maintained that distilling the complexities of Beethoven's last symphony for one player at one instrument was patently impossible. Yet in 1865, living in seclusion at a monastery on the Monte Mario overlooking Rome, he produced a translation of one musical medium to another that has yet to be surpassed in scope, craft or inspiration.

From the beginning, with Martynov's skilful evocation of the lightning-bolt open fifths piercing the ominous clouds that cloak the Ninth's first moments, the overwhelming impression is not of reduction but of an enlargement, an opening out, a sudden clarification of this familiar music. Paradoxically, Beethoven's titanic vision, far from being tamed or diminished, looms even larger, more terrifying than is normally communicated in orchestral performances. Giving periods of relaxed contrast their full due, Martynov nevertheless maintains the inexorable trajectory of the movement to the end.

It is in the Scherzo that the advantages of Martynov's instrument are perhaps most apparent. His fleet, *secco* performance is abetted by the quick sound decay of the



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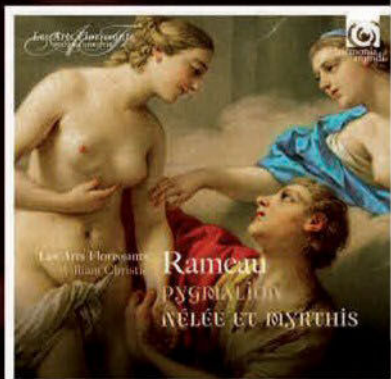


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Marc Ponthus: fully in control in the complete piano music of the late Pierre Boulez

Blüthner. Its lighter action also allows Martynov to establish and maintain an exhilarating tempo, here framing astonishing feats of agility. Enlivened by stirring rhythmicity, Martynov conjures a sonorous constellation that both thrills and amazes. The Trio has a minute delicacy that nevertheless remains bracingly masculine. After listening to the Scherzo repeatedly, I'm still surprised and a little disappointed when it ends.

With its requirement of emulating sustained string choirs, the *Adagio* poses unique challenges. Martynov meets them by creating an air of pervasive calm, out of which blossoms a narrative that reaches towards the supernal realms. Without courting stasis, Martynov achieves an unencumbered, otherworldly suspension of time. The increasingly elaborate figurations that embellish the music's harmonic progress are better experienced than described.

The metamorphosis from the storm unleashed at the opening of the finale to the imploring earnestness of the 'Ode to Joy' is stunningly affecting. But it is scant preparation for the combination of rhythmic precision, colouristic imagination,

judicious pacing and sheer exercise of musical will with which Martynov conjures the sublime exaltation of Beethoven's exhortation. The abrupt shifts of affective gear occurring in the last five minutes seem perfectly natural but, despite their familiarity, here they emerge as freshly surprising and uplifting.

Of the major Romantics, Liszt alone had a personal connection with Beethoven. A case could be made that this first-hand association would prove to be the defining event of his life. Even in old age, he continued to refer to Beethoven as his great ideal, the lodestar of his artistic universe. Liszt's advocacy of Beethoven's music, at a time when many of his contemporaries were either unfamiliar with or baffled by the late-period works, is a matter of historical record.

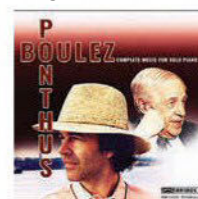
At a remove of almost two centuries, the closest we may get to the actual experience of the galvanising effect Beethoven had on the next generation could well be these monuments erected by one of his most ardent disciples. Before the earliest attempts at sound reproduction, Liszt drew on every means at his disposal to create an accurate replica, a facsimile, of works he

recognised as uniquely powerful, in order that others might better know and understand an artistic legacy he loved and valued above all.

Yury Martynov is one of the few pianists around with the technical resources, musical grasp and conviction to recreate this legacy persuasively. In doing so, he amply demonstrates its continued usefulness and vitality. It seems safe to say that he has given us the Beethoven-Liszt cycle for our time, and one unlikely soon to be superseded. **Patrick Rucker**

Boulez

'Complete Music for Solo Piano'
Piano Sonatas - No 1; No 2; No 3. Incises.
Notations. Une page d'éphéméride
Marc Ponthus *pf*
Bridge © ② BRIDGE9456 (81' • DDD)



Pierre Boulez's complete oeuvre for solo piano encompasses three piano sonatas (1946, 1948, 1957), a chain of miniatures grouped together as *Douze*

Notations (1945) and two small occasional pieces, *Incises* (2001) and *Une page d'éphéméride* (2005). Marc Ponthus is the second pianist, following Dimitri Vassilakis's 2012 set on Cybele, to have recorded all this music as a job lot.

The ghosts of Maurizio Pollini, Charles Rosen and Claude Helffer – if not necessarily Idil Biret on Naxos and DG's Paavali Jumppanen – hang heavy, of course, and Vassilakis and Ponthus are representatives of a new generation of Boulez interpreters, alongside Pi-Hsien Chen, whose 2005 release on HatArt (the three sonatas and *Notations* only) remains giddingly brilliant. Chen is broadly faithful to the music's modernist idiom. There are moments during Vassilakis's set when you feel a conscious (re-)positioning of the music towards embracing earlier traditions in French piano music; and, rather neatly, Ponthus pitches his aesthetic tent equidistant between these two approaches, his pianism engaging fully with what this music can do, rather than just what it is.

Chatter persists, including from those who should know better, that making a judgement about which recording of Boulez's piano music to choose is a pointless task as only bat (or Boulez) ears could distinguish right notes from wrong. But Ponthus opens with the Second Sonata, immediately imposing character and definition on the music. His high-velocity vault through the opening movement – marked *Extrêmement rapide* – takes Boulez at his word, coming in a whole two minutes faster than Chen (5'22" against 7'39") and making even Pollini sound overly deliberate. But Ponthus doesn't just have quicksilver fingers. The phrasing, the harmonic evolution and the music's rhythmic inner engine spark into intelligent life; he voyages deep inside the music's journey, the desolate and sparse weave of the second movement's beginning feeling not only logical but musically necessary.

His unpicking of the Third Sonata's modular structure corroborates my intuition that Ponthus has the Second Sonata's four-movement construct entirely under his control. Subtle nuances of timbre and harmonic urgency stress that the Third Sonata is an unfolding and living structure that ought not solidify into a form. In comparison, *Incises* and *Une page d'éphéméride* resonate as pretty enough doodles; but the First Sonata and the kaleidoscopic *Douze Notations* feel suitably packed with variety and event. As a postscript, I'm duty bound to

comment that Bridge's hilariously terrible cover art might actively dissuade some potential punters – a recurring Achilles heel that this otherwise consistently excellent label urgently needs to address.

Philip Clark

Piano Works – selected comparison:

Vassilakis (CYBE) KIG004

Piano Sonatas, Notations – selected comparison:

Chen (A/O5) (HATA) HATN162

Brahms · Franck

Brahms Piano Sonata No 3, Op 5

Franck Prélude, Choral et Fugue

Sunwook Kim *pf*

Accentus © ACC303552 (59' • DDD)



It is a rare thing indeed for a young pianist, fresh from a victory at one of

the world's major competitions, to resist the blandishments of management, producers and well-wishers to record a solo disc. But that is what Sunwook Kim, the now 28-year-old first-place winner of the 2006 Leeds, has done. Until last summer, that is, when he recorded two in Berlin: one of Beethoven sonatas (1/16) and the present disc of Brahms and Franck.

Kim's deep feelings for Franck are obvious in the breadth and emotional resonance he brings to the *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*. The fluttering figurations of the Prelude speak with a delicate poignancy and the Fugue blossoms into that ecstatic exaltation so characteristic of Franck. It faces some stiff competition, however, since the 2010 account by Bertrand Chamayou is likely to hold the field for the foreseeable future.

Facing the manifold challenges of one of the most un pianistic of sonatas, Brahms's F minor, Kim is justifiably more circumspect. Especially striking is the pristine clarity he invests in the score's often murky textures. Kim's lean sound is especially welcome in the opening movement, where it helps activate the forward thrust of the musical argument. Things become a bit waylaid in the *Andante*, however, with its over-abundance of sentiment, veering perilously close to preciousness. The energy of the Scherzo provides bracing contrast, though its flight is occasionally tethered by a heavy, undifferentiated bass. The brief Intermezzo prepares a truly impressive finale. Kim delineates the proliferation of thematic material with aplomb, pulls off a

galvanising fugato and achieves a wonderful orchestral heft in the lonely cadential chords that end the piece. This may not be the last word in the Brahms F minor but there can be little doubt that Kim will be back to share with us his evolving love of this fantastically challenging music.

Patrick Rucker

Franck – selected comparison:

Chamayou (9/10) (NAILV) V5208

Chopin · Hough

'Pure Chopin'

Chopin Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35. Etudes:

Op 10 – No 3; No 5; No 12, 'Revolutionary';

Op 25 – No 12. Polonaises – No 3, 'Military';

Op 40 No 1; No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53. Waltzes –

No 1, Op 18; No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 6, 'Minute';

Op 64 No 1; No 7, Op 64 No 2; No 10, Op *posth*

Hough Nocturne oriental

Ji Liu *pf*

Classic FM © CFMD41 (75' • DDD)



Ji Liu's debut album 'Piano Reflections' shot straight to No 1 in the classical charts,

making him, apparently, 'the biggest-selling breakthrough artist of 2014', since when his public profile (in the UK, at least) has been invisible. Jed Distler was lukewarm in his review of the disc (8/14) and I'm afraid I must follow suit with this bog-standard selection of popular Chopin.

To the casual listener there is nothing noticeably wrong with it: the sound Liu produces is full and rounded with a lovely singing tone; he has been well recorded in a natural acoustic; and you will rarely hear each note Chopin wrote so clearly delineated (listen to the trills in the second part of the A major 'Military' Polonaise, for example, or the last movement of the Second Piano Sonata, perhaps the most deliberate on record). There is much to admire, not least the superbly articulated 'Black Key' Etude (Op 10 No 5), where Liu's playing finally transcends the bounds of the studio. Stephen Hough's newly composed Chopin-inspired *Nocturne oriental* makes an atmospheric bonus track.

It's all just fine – if you like your Chopin straight off the page with no flavouring. Ji Liu, Shanghai-born (1990) and London-based, is the antithesis of those pianists whose playing was a fusion of the composer's and artist's thoughts back in the day when one went to hear, say, Hofmann's Chopin, Moiseiwitsch's Chopin or Cherkassky's Chopin. Liu's is faceless, anonymous Chopin. Of individuality, charm, insouciance or something new to


say about these works (all of which have been recorded to distraction by dozens of immeasurably greater pianists) there is only a glimmer.

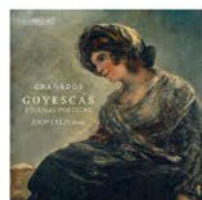
The booklet (which to Classic FM's discredit says nothing of Ji Liu or the music) is a contender for Ridiculous CD Cover of the Year, consisting of several pictures of the pianist either doing a t'ai chi exercise or auditioning for a remake of *Thunderbirds*. I'm not sure which but it's unlikely to imbue the potential customer with confidence. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Granados

Goyescas. Escenas poéticas. Intermezzo de la ópera Goyescas. El pelele (Escena goyesca)

Joop Celis *pf*

BIS  BIS2122 (77) • DDD/DSD



Granados succinctly described his *Goyescas* suite as a work

abounding with 'great flights of imagination and difficulties', which, however, have not stopped an increasing number of pianists from braving its challenges on disc. Given his masterful way with York Bowen's complex keyboard language, Joop Celis unsurprisingly navigates Granados's labyrinthine textures with no sweat and strain, and with a beautiful, evenly modulated sonority to boot.

But he's not the most convincing *Goyescas* practitioner around. Take, for example, the cycle's pentultimate movement, 'El Amor y la Muerte', arguably Granados's greatest piano piece. It's packed with sudden dynamic extremes that Celis often flattens out. He also tends to telegraph changes in tempo, consequently smoothing over their dramatic impact. 'Los requiebros' is pianistically pristine, yet Celis underplays the exultant climaxes and the dazzling chiaroscuro of inner voices. The smouldering momentum of 'El fandango de candil' sounds matter-of-fact next to the simmering tension that Luis Fernando Pérez generates, to say nothing of Alicia de Larrocha's benchmark recordings.

Conversely, the introspective, flamenco-like passages in 'Coloquio en la reja' emerge with more shape and rhythmic point. And the eloquence and linear transparency that Celis brings to the opening section of 'Quejas, ó La maja y el ruiseñor' makes one wonder if Granados and Fauré had been separated at birth. *El pelele*, of course, is Spanish through and through, and interpreted here with controlled vivacity.

Interestingly, the relatively modest technical and musical parameters of *Escenas poéticas* elicit more consistently inspired and organically poetic playing. Listen to the translucent understatement of 'Danza de la rosa', the Berceuse's characterful simplicity or the exquisite balances and lyrical magic that make you want to programme 'Canción de Margarita' in repeat mode. In short, *Goyescas* may get star billing, yet the *Escenas poéticas* walk away with top honours. **Jed Distler**

Goyescas – selected comparisons:

Larrocha (12/77⁸, 4/96) (DECC) 448 191-2DF2

Pérez (4/12) (MIRA) MIRI38

Liszt • Schumann


'Duels'

Beethoven/Liszt Symphony No 7, Op 92 –

Allegretto Liszt Piano Sonata, S178

Schumann Kreisleriana, Op 16

Simon Ghraichy *pf*

Challenge Classics  CC72698 (74) • DDD



The Mexican-Lebanese pianist Simon Ghraichy avoids the now routine

pairing of the Liszt Sonata with the Schumann Fantasy, substituting instead Schumann's thorny *Kreisleriana* for a welcome contrast.

In the Liszt Sonata, Ghraichy seems intent on an unconventional, even contrarian interpretation. The very legitimate device of 'breaking the hands' – playing the hands not precisely simultaneously for expressive effect – is lavishly applied. At the very beginning, however, 'breaking' the descending octaves only serves to ambiguate their ominous portent. Elsewhere, this profligate avoidance of solid chords weakens the underlying rhythmic scaffolding. Ghraichy's tendency to release surges of energy, à la Rachmaninov, at climactic moments causes him to obscure passages in splatters of notes, even as he plays havoc with the pulse. Unfortunately the overall effect is of grand rhetorical gestures reduced to hollow grandiloquence. Tempestuousness lapses into hysteria.

If a limited dynamic palette and narrow spectrum of articulation strategies impede the Liszt, they loom large in *Kreisleriana*. Without doubt, Ghraichy portrays the characteristic dreamy, languid moods of Schumann quite beautifully. However, he tends to play repeated lines, passages, even pages (or their close parallels) as though they were photocopies of the first

presentation. In an extended work such as *Kreisleriana*, so filled with meaningful retrospection, these mindlessly unvaried repeats grow tiresome.

From the outset, the *Allegretto* from the Beethoven-Liszt Seventh Symphony is off on the wrong foot. Oddly, Ghraichy chooses to emphasise the second beat of each measure. Perhaps the intent was to differentiate the *tenuto* first-beat crotchet from the quaver staccatos of the second. But with its fundamental dactyl pulse distorted, the movement's emblematic solemn dignity is irretrievable.


Despite careful scrutiny of the booklet-notes by Alla Hoffmann and Nicolas Dufetel, I am unable to say why this CD should be entitled 'Duels'.

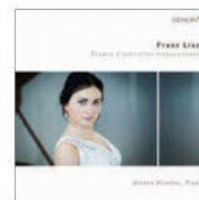
Patrick Rucker

Liszt

Études d'exécution transcendante, S139

Dinara Klinton *pf*

Genuin  GEN16409 (67) • DDD



Liszt's cycle of 12 studies (his original idea was to write 24 in each of the

major and minor keys) remains a formidable challenge both musically and technically. While their difficulties are exceeded by Alkan's *Études*, Op 39 (published some six years later in 1857) and the even more digitally demanding *60 Grandes études*, Op 63, by the forgotten Amédée Méreaux (1802-74), they have always largely been the preserve of male pianists. This may have as much to do with physical strength and stamina as it does with hand size (though in his final version Liszt removed all stretches greater than a tenth). Whatever the reason, of nearly 30 different versions currently available only four are by women.

So it is an added pleasure to be able to say that this account by the 26-year-old Ukrainian Dinara Klinton holds its own against all comers. True, her tempi are somewhat more relaxed than those of Lazar Berman, Vladimir Ovchinnikov, Georges Cziffra and Boris Berezovsky (my personal front-runners), whose overall timings are between 62'24" and 64'00"; Klinton's is 67'21", Jorge Bolet's 70'30". There is, though, no lack of drama and physicality in her playing: when Liszt requests *il più forte possibile* in 'Mazeppa', for instance, Klinton is happy to oblige and thunders with the best of them (beautifully recorded throughout, by the way). And if deft fingerwork were

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Nataša Veljković: exploring the piano music of the overlooked Dora Pejačević

the only attribute needed for these wonderful tone-poems, then the *leggiero* triplets in the untitled Etude No 2 and the exacting passagework of 'Feux follets' will surely satisfy all but the most picky of Lisztians.

Others have brought more menace to 'Chasse-neige' and I think she does not articulate the second major theme of 'Wilde Jagd' – *espressivo* and *a capriccio* with the left hand marked *quasi timpani* – quite clearly enough. There are other minor quibbles, none of them sufficiently important to detract from the overall achievement of a most musical account of Liszt's masterpiece.

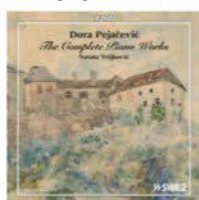
Jeremy Nicholas

Pejačević

The Complete Piano Works

Nataša Veljković *pf*

CPO © 2 CPO555 003-2 (157 • DDD)



My introduction to Dora Pejačević (1885–1923) came via the sixth of CPO's

pioneering discs devoted to her music (7/15), featuring some attractive vocal items and her accomplished Piano Concerto. After this seventh volume, it is even more of a mystery how she has been so completely overlooked.

Pejačević's complete solo piano works fit handily on two well-filled CDs (79'06" and 78'22"). Nataša Veljković wisely mixes the early works with the later ones, opening disc 1 with the eight *Blumenleben*, Op 19 – assured, high-end salon music – and followed by the three-movements-in-one Sonata (11'48") from 1921, with its more advanced harmonic language. After that Veljković returns to the salon with the *Fantasiestücke*, Op 17, six brief sketches (highlights of the disc for me), in which Pejačević conveys real depth of emotion with the most economical of means.

As with most *intégrales*, there are ups and downs. For instance, the nine *Walzer-Capricen*, Op 28 (No 8 is misnumbered in the booklet) are charming enough but betray Pejačević's weakness as a memorable melodist (essential in this genre). But her Sonata No 1 in B minor, Op 36 (three movements, 24'07",

composed in 1915), while saying nothing new, is powerful and passionate; and the *Zwei Klavierskizzen*, Op 44, and *Zwei Intermezzi*, Op 38, show how far Pejačević travelled (there are echoes of Korngold and Busoni), especially when set beside – as they are here – 10 of Pejačević's earliest works concluding with the arresting *Trauermarsch*, Op 14 (6'31", not the booklet's 1'34"). These are very brief and indebted to Mendelssohn, Grieg and Chaminade, any one of whose names, had they been attached to these scores, would have guaranteed nods of universal approval.

Veljković plays consistently well with imagination, an impressive variety of touch and tone and a real flair for the idiom. Perhaps not essential listening, but those of a mildly adventurous disposition will find much to enjoy.

Jeremy Nicholas

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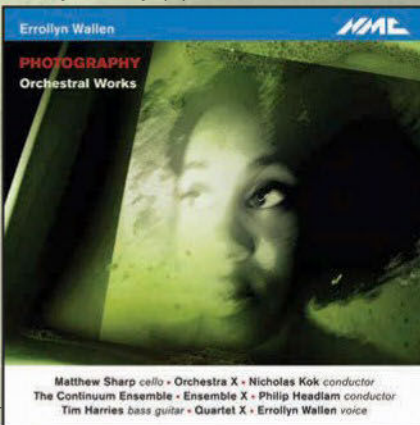
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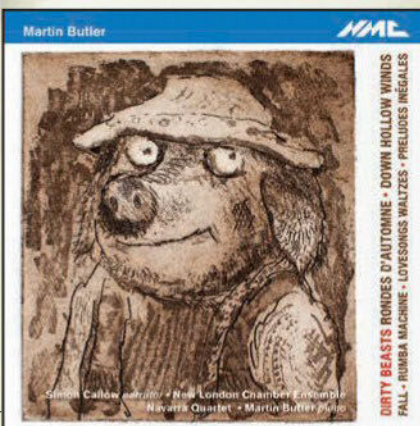


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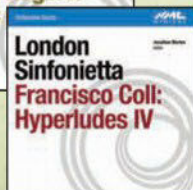
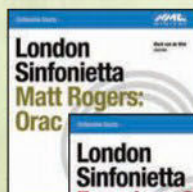
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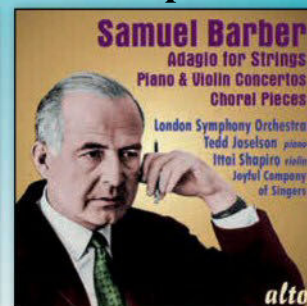
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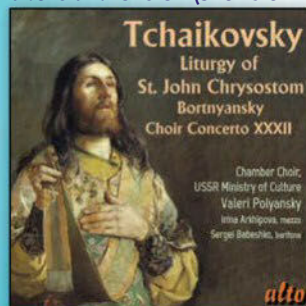
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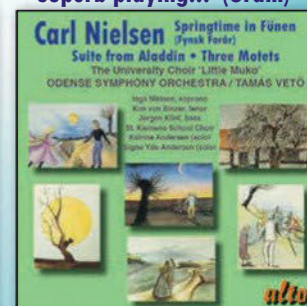
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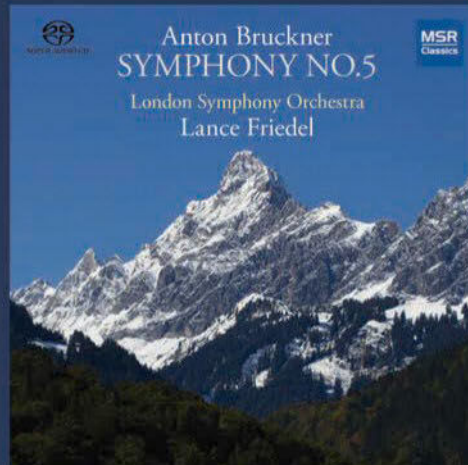


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www.ClassicalCDReview.com

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Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin – Sarabande; Menuets; Les Sauvages **Royer** Premier Livre de pièces pour clavecin – Allemande; Les Matelots; Tambourins; Le Vertigo; La Zaïde; La marche des Scythes; L'Aimable

Jean Rondeau *hpd*

Erato ⑤ 2564 69745-8 (72' • DDD)



This is the second recital disc from the young French harpsichordist Jean

Rondeau. The first, a selection of Bach transcriptions, got a warm hello here (3/15), but others since have suggested that he is a player who provokes divided opinions. What seems clear, however, is that, having started on the instrument at the age of six, he has developed an affinity for it and a comfort in its presence that allow him to see in it its possibilities rather than its limitations, thus encouraging the free spirit in him. That is still a relatively rare thing among harpsichordists, and we should surely welcome it.

The repertoire he plays here – flamboyant and exotic late-Baroque fare from Rameau and Royer – seems a good fit for him. His agile and rock-solid finger technique means that Rameau's *Les Niais de Sologne* and Royer's *La marche des Scythes* can thrill as they should while never trampling on the gorgeous deep tone of the magnificent instrument, an 18th-century original attributed to Donzelague and known (after the place where it lives) as the 'Château d'Assas harpsichord'. Yet he can also find the poetic eloquence in Royer's *La Zaïde* and *L'aimable*, and Rameau's *Les tendres plaintes* and (especially) the exquisite *L'entretien des Muses*, but the qualities with which he achieves that – an almost casually fluid approach to the rhythmic dislocation of individual lines and an ability to assume ornamentation into them as if it had always been there – are actually the ones that distinguish his performance style across the range of these pieces. His booklet-note reveals a strong visual imagination which likes to link these pieces to their operatic alter egos, and he is right to claim a filmic quality for the extraordinary, fractured *Le Vertigo*. And although that is not to say that he is incapable of over-egging things – his unhurried freedom risks losing hold of momentum in places, and his drawn-out account of *Musette en rondeau* surely misses the beguiling simplicity of Rameau's piece – there is no doubt that here is a

player of immense ability, from whom we reasonably may hope for much.

Lindsay Kemp

Ricordi

Carnaval vénitien. La bal de la Poupée. Le quadrille des bébés Incassables. Le lanciers de Mademoiselle Ninette. La mazurka de Monsieur Loulou. Sir Roger de Coverley. Galop abracadabrant. Bonne nuit, Poupée! (Petite berceuse). Le livre des sérénades

Gabriella Morelli, Giancarlo Simonacci *pf*

Brilliant ⑤ 95158 (77' • DDD)



Most readers of *Gramophone* will have heard the name Ricordi, the great

Italian music publisher. How many though, I wonder, will have heard any music by Ricordi, specifically Giulio Ricordi (1840-1912), grandson of the founder, the man who tempted the ageing Verdi out of retirement and who nurtured, among others, the young Puccini? More to the point, how many would be interested in hearing his music? And would your preconceptions be altered in any way if you were told the music was by Jules Burgmein, the curious pseudonym Ricordi adopted as a composer?

Well, cast all cynicism aside and surrender to this delightful selection of his piano duets. Ricordi was, as Verdi himself and the ageing Liszt acknowledged, 'a master musician' whose music was 'beautiful and distinctive'. If you like playing and/or listening to Bizet's *Jeux d'enfants* or Moszkowski's *Spanish Dances* you'll find these hard to resist, some of the titles alone indicating that Ricordi wrote with a similar musical twinkle in his eye: the five tiny pieces that make up *The Indestructible Babies' Barn Dance*, for example, *Mr Loulou's Mazurka* or the catchy *Galop abracadabrant*.

The enterprising Gabriella Morelli and Giancarlo Simonacci convey in a natural acoustic and with expert ease exactly the right atmosphere required of high-end domestic music-making (though they can certainly put a foot on the gas when they need to), while also cannily presenting three premiere recordings: the four short movements of *Carnaval vénitien* (1881), *Le bal de la Poupée* (1885) and, most significantly, *Le livre des sérénades* (1883, dedicated to Liszt), 15 miniatures descriptive of geographical areas from Arabia to England (very jolly) and Havana to India, fresh, curious and often surprising – the last, 'Sérénade chinoise',

incorporating a timbric effect not encountered again until the first of Schonberg's Op 11 pieces. Intriguing?

Jeremy Nicholas

Sibelius

'Piano Works – The Published Piano Works'

Six Impromptus, Op 5. Piano Sonata, Op 12. Ten Pieces, Op 24. Bagatelles, Op 34. Pensées lyriques, Op 40. Kyllikki, Op 41. Ten Pieces, Op 58. Three Sonatinas, Op 67. Zwei Rondos, Op 68. Lyrische Stücke, Op 74. Cinq Morceaux, Op 75. Treize Morceaux, Op 76. Cinq Morceaux, Op 85. Six Pieces, Op 94. Valse chevaleresque, Op 96c. Valse lyrique, Op 96a. Sechs Bagatellen, Op 97. Huit Petits morceaux, Op 99. Five Romantic Compositions, Op 101. Five Characteristic Impressions, Op 103. Fünf Skizzen, Op 114

Janne Mertenan *pf*

Sony Classical ⑤ 88875 16142-2 (5h 7' • DDD)



Sibelius's piano music continues to divide opinion, and few commentators, with

the notable exception of biographer Erik Tawaststjerna (whose son also recorded it in its entirety for BIS), have made any great claims for it. Even the composer himself was conflicted, once confessing to the impresario Walter Legge that 'I do not care for the piano – it is an unsatisfying, ungrateful instrument which only one composer, Chopin, has fully succeeded in mastering, and two others, Debussy and Schumann, have come on intimate terms.' Glenn Gould, on the other hand, was a fan: 'Sibelius never wrote against the grain of the keyboard. In his piano music everything works, everything sings – but on its own terms.'

Janne Mertenan's ambitious survey, recorded for Sony Finland but now available online in the UK, fills five CDs, the first of which launches with the Ten Pieces, Op 24, the best known of which is the tenderly nostalgic No 9 in D flat major (much beloved of Cherkassky and others). Elsewhere, the bardic sweep of No 2 in A major reminds us that the intoxicating tone-poem *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of Saari* was not long completed. Both the Six Impromptus and Piano Sonata are earlier and show the influence of Karelian folk music (the central *Andantino* of the latter is an especially fetching creation), but the piano-writing lacks idiomatic fluency and the sonata itself is a disappointingly short-winded affair.

By far the most durable inspiration on disc 2 is to be found in *Kyllikki*, three

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

BACH ON THE HARPSICHORD

Lindsay Kemp listens to the latest additions to the ever-expanding discography of the Leipzig master's keyboard works



Jean-Luc Ho uses six different harpsichords and six different tuning systems in his new recording of Bach's Partitas

With no shortage of recordings of core Bach keyboard repertoire from giants of the field both old and new, it goes without saying that any new arrival on the scene has to be something special to make an impact. Despite its robustness, however, Bach's music does not naturally invite as wide a variety of interpretational styles as some other Baroque repertoire, so often it is not in immediately obvious ways that a new performance can state its case.

The individuality of **Martha Cook's** recording of *The Art of Fugue* lies principally in her presentation of the work in a version she reckons Bach had as his ideal, basing her thinking on what his own unfinished manuscript tells us rather than the posthumously published edition. On the surface this means a different ordering of the movements and the omission of Contrapuncti XII and XIII, but Cook, armed with numerological back-up, has also seen within this original sequence of fugues a commentary on a section from St Luke's Gospel focused on the proposition 'he who does not take

up the cross, and follow me, cannot be my disciple'. In truth her booklet-note does not explain things all that clearly – French-speaking readers may perhaps gain more from her recently published study *L'art de fugue, une méditation en musique* (Fayard, Paris) – but the significance of it to this recording is not so much musicological as inspirational, allowing Cook to shape her playing of the work not as a collection of contrapuntal exercises but as a 'speaking' work of meditation and prayer. This contemplative element may explain a rather serious approach and deliberate tempi but her performance has commitment, clarity and a Leonhardt-like care over note placement.

Speaking through the keyboard seems to be **Erich Traxler's** stated aim in his recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, in which, he says, 'I tried to dive into the ocean of musical elocution and share my experiences of the multiple layers of this piece'. Well, he really is getting in with some big fish here, and I'm not sure that even the carefully applied rubato of, say, Variation 8, prevents a muscular combination of rippling

virtuosity and firmly but subtly shifting momentum from being his performance's most obvious attribute. Traxler has the fingers to glitter in Var 20, flicker in Var 26 and dazzle in Var 29, but he is somewhat cool with the slower and more sinuous Vars 16 and 25, where some listeners may hope for rather more searching examination. In this context, the decision to leave in the sound of the instrument's registration being changed between variations is an oddly disruptive one, but my main problem with this thoroughly competent performance is the clattery and congested sound, an irritant that seems only slight at first but which grows more airless as the piece goes on.

For his recording of the Partitas, **Jean-Luc Ho** seeks to capture the *Affekt* of each one – 'from the innocence and grace of the First Partita to the "instrumental Passion" enacted in the Sixth' – using six different harpsichords and six different tuning systems. He also links them to the seasonal moods of his three recording sessions: winter (Nos 1 and 6), spring (2 and 5) and summer (3 and 4), in which

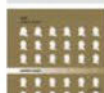
case summer would seem very much like the best time to meet him. For while No 4 shows an exuberant grandeur, some of the others are hampered by ponderous tempi and a dispiriting lack of variety. Ho proves that he has a sound sense of line and creates convincing flights in the right-hand ornamentation of the Sarabande of No 1 and some of the allemandes, but in quicker movements a dogged left hand, with strong and weak beats insufficiently differentiated, tends to pull things back to earth. The playfulness of pieces such as the Rondeaux of No 2 or the Tempo di minuetta of No 5 draws not a smile, and too often there is little sense of that vital element which Ho claims he 'loves': dance.

Only one of these releases comes without a mission statement, and (guess what) it is the one that least needs it, for in Book 1 of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* Céline Frisch proves that she is a natural Bach harpsichordist to the ends of her fingers. Throughout these 24 preludes and fugues she plays with a crisp momentum and virtuosity that never lets up, yet is kept interesting by skilled and unobtrusive use of rubato and note-placement. Ideas and personality are here in plenty – the C sharp minor Fugue sheds a little of its usual weight for something more vigorous but in its way no less dark, the walking left-hand of the B minor Prelude acquires a delicious light tread, and I've never heard the C minor Fugue sound so jaunty – yet all seem to grow organically out of what is there in the music. Some may find Frisch's playing a little brisk overall, I suppose, but if she is breezy she is bracing too – who could resist her sparkling race through the D major Prelude, crowned at the end by a glorious flourish of ornamentation? Though the recording is rather resonant, Frisch's Bach is a joy to listen to. Let's hope for more. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



JS Bach The Art of Fugue
Martha Cook
Passacaille (M) (2) PAS1014



JS Bach Goldberg Variations
Erich Traxler
Paladino (C) PMR0073



JS Bach Six Keyboard Partitas
Jean-Luc Ho
NoMadMusic (F) NMM016



JS Bach The Well-Tempered Clavier,
Book 1 Céline Frisch
Alpha (M) (2) ALPHA221

darkly expressive pieces that date from around the time of the Second Symphony. I also like the quiet individuality of the Two Rondinos, whereas the Op 34 Bagatelles and Op 40 *Pensées lyriques* between them serve up a pretty thin brew. Disc 3 brings the most rewarding haul, coupling the Ten Pieces, Op 58, with the three Sonatinas, Op 67. The former display a notably deft demeanour: Nos 1 and 10 ('Rêverie' and 'Sommerlied') are especially lovely, and Sibelius himself understandably thought very highly of No 5 ('Des Abends'). The sonatinas (probably Sibelius's most compelling work for the piano) comprise an agreeably pithy, quirky sequence, their lean textures and pellucid part-writing finding favour with the great Wilhelm Kempff, who once remarked that the First Sonatina was something 'to polish one's touch on'.

As for the epigrammatic contents of the remaining two discs, it's very much a case of feeding from scraps, which is not to say that there isn't the occasional tasty morsel. The two volumes of miniatures known as 'Tree Cycle' and 'Flower Cycle', Opp 75 and 85, certainly contain some delightful invention: try No 2 ('The Solitary Pine') from the former, sometimes thought of as a self-portrait of the composer. Listen out, too, for the hymn-like tune from the *Andante festivo* for strings in the first ('The Village Church') of the *Five Characteristic Impressions*, Op 103; and do I detect a suggestion of the Seventh Symphony in the charming No 3 ('The Oarsman') from the same collection?

Set down over a period of six years, this must have been a labour of love for the excellent Janne Mertanen (a pupil of Erik T Tawaststjerna and Lazar Berman), who proves a clean-fingered, imaginative and shapely exponent throughout. Recordings are bright and crisp to match. Antti Häyrynen supplies a helpful booklet essay and Sony's presentation is most attractive. Devoted Sibelians will, I think, enjoy dipping into this enterprising box; the rest should probably approach with an element of caution. **Andrew Achenbach**

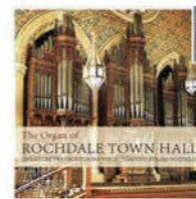
'Overture Transcriptions, Vol 2'

JS Bach A Stronghold Sure (from Cantata No 80, transcr Grace) **Handel** Ptolemy - Overture (transcr Lang) **Nicolai** The Merry Wives of Windsor - Overture (transcr Lemare) **Spohr** Jessonda - Overture (transcr Best) **Tchaikovsky** Romeo and Juliet (transcr Lemare) **Verdi** La traviata - Overture (transcr Byram-Wigfield) **Weber** Oberon - Overture (transcr Peace)

Timothy Byram-Wigfield.org

Delphian (F) DCD34143 (67' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Rochdale Town Hall



Here's a good old-fashioned town hall organ recital of the kind that had people

queuing round the block in the decades before the advent of the gramophone and radio. For instance, Edwin Lemare's recitals in the late 1890s at St Margaret's, Westminster, attracted crowds so great that not only were people turned away but police had to clear a way for his carriage.

Lemare, certainly the most innovative transcriber of orchestral works for the organ during his lifetime (1865-1934), is represented here by Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Overture and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*. If you didn't know, you would think they were both original works for the organ.

The latter incorporates a spectacularly demanding example of Lemare's speciality – thumbing down, ie where the thumb stretches down to play the melody on one manual while the four fingers of the same hand play the accompaniment on the manual above. In the second battle scene of Tchaikovsky's score, Lemare asks for both hands to thumb down simultaneously. Byram-Wigfield's first-rate booklet reproduces that passage from the score. 'Seldom,' he comments wryly, 'has this technique been used to such a challenging extent.'

What else makes this recital particularly appealing is the clarity of texture with which the Rochdale organ is captured (by producer/engineer Paul Baxter). The 1912 four-manual Binns instrument (restored by Walker & Sons in 1979) offers all the orchestral colours and dynamics you could wish for in this repertoire, no details of which are lost, as is frequently the case in a cathedral setting. Pedal definition is especially good. Apart from Byram-Wigfield's virtuosity and fluent registrations, there are the further bonuses of his own transcription of the Prelude to Act 1 of *La traviata* (highlighting the Binns's vivid string stops) and the rarity of Spohr's Overture to his 1823 opera *Jessonda* transcribed by the great WT Best, Lemare's predecessor as the organ's pre-eminent exponent.

Jeremy Nicholas

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Tan Dun

Marc Rochester profiles the first Chinese composer to achieve wide acclaim for his blend of East and West

Some of us can point to a particular teacher whose influence affected the whole course of our lives. (Mine is a fellow contributor to *Gramophone*, but that's another story.) Tan Dun recalls one who not only inspired him to look to a musical world beyond China, but who so deeply affected him and his fellow-students (notably Zhou Long and Chen Yi) that they travelled to the US for further study with him and have stayed there ever since. 'In the middle of the 1980s Professor Chou Wen-chung visited the Central Conservatory in Beijing, and it happened we were all in one class and we all followed him to New York,' Tan recalls. We were born in a cage, the country was blocked, and we had no idea even where New York was!

Freed from that cage, Tan Dun has gone on to achieve international recognition for music which combines Chinese and Western elements, traditional structures with 21st-century technologies, and academic rigour with unashamed populism. His music is as wide-ranging as it is all-embracing, and resonates with a global audience.

He started attracting international attention in the early 1990s, but it was his *Heaven Earth Mankind* (Symphony 1997), written for, and performed at, the handover of Hong Kong

'My music is a path towards reconciliation...a quest for human roots. It is for and about people' – Tan Dun

from British to Chinese rule, which first brought his name before the wider, global public. Another symphony, *2000 Today: A World Symphony for the Millennium*, was broadcast to some 55 countries on January 1, 2000. That same year *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was released, Tan Dun's score for the movie catapulting him to a level of international fame and adulation no other Asian composer has ever experienced. It earned him an Oscar (he is the first Chinese composer to win one) and ignited an appetite for his music which has barely dimmed. His *Internet Symphony No 1* commissioned in 2008 by Google/YouTube was heard, it is estimated, by 15 million people worldwide, but even this pales into insignificance in comparison with the 4.7 billion people who, at a rough estimate, are said to have heard his music for the 2010 Beijing Olympics, when it was played at the opening and closing ceremonies and repeated a total of 774 times at each of the medal-awarding ceremonies.

What makes Tan's phenomenal popular success so remarkable is that his formative years were lived in total ignorance of Western music. His earliest musical experiences were in his home village of Si Mao in Hunan Province, which was something of a focal point for burials. As he recalls,



Hearing the Philadelphia Orchestra play Beethoven inspired Tan to compose

'It was where old people were buried and I grew up among crying songs, mourning songs.' If those funeral processions gave birth to an early interest in music, it could so easily have been killed by the Cultural Revolution which swept China in 1966.

In a purge of perceived 'impure elements' in Chinese society, Mao Zedong set out to destroy anything which had been tainted by foreign influences – and this included music. Tan was nine at the time and to instil in him an awareness of his duty to society, he was sent into a remote rural community to work in the fields. What neither Mao nor his soldiers could stop were the folk melodies Tan heard sung in those fields and the occasional performances of traditional music within that community. It was the latter which first brought Tan into the world of musical performance. When a ferry carrying a Peking Opera troupe sank with a heavy loss of life, he was called on to join the surviving musicians as an erhu player.

In 1973, as a consequence of Richard Nixon's efforts to improve US-China relations, the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy were invited to China. Their concerts were broadcast over state radio and reached the ears of Tan as he worked in the rice fields. Large loudspeakers set up to play inspirational radio broadcasts to the agricultural labourers relayed the strains of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and so inspired was the teenage Tan that he decided to become a composer. Three years later, with the end of the Cultural Revolution and the reopening of the Central Conservatory in Beijing, he applied to study composition and was accepted. Nevertheless, a climate of anti-Western feeling persisted, and Tan's music was banned for a short period during 1983 because of its 'spiritual pollution'. When, in 1986, a scholarship enabled him to study with Chou in New York he took it. The rest, as they say, is history.



TAN DUN FACTS

Born Si Mao, Hunan Province, China, August 18, 1957

Early career Rice planter in Huangjin commune; Erhu player with travelling Peking Opera Troupe

Education Selected as one of 30, from several thousand applications, to join the composition class at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. Columbia University, New York, 1986-93

Breakthrough work *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)


Latest work *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds* – first performed July 10, 2015 by the National Youth Orchestra of the US conducted by Charles Dutoit. ‘Inspired by the thinking of Da Vinci and mankind’s ongoing endeavour to understand the world around us, the music draws on forms and methods from East and West, ancient and modern, and incorporates birdsong produced by smartphones.’

Citation UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador ‘in recognition of his efforts to promote inter-cultural dialogue through music, consciousness of the scarcity of natural resources such as water, and the diversity of languages’.

‘I see my life as a reflection of my music,’ Tan says – and with a life so full of extraordinary experiences, it is little wonder that his music is so richly varied. His output, numbering around 80 works, ranges from opera, concerto and symphony to works for Chinese instruments, music drawing on pop culture and ancient Chinese tales, multi-media and experimental works and film scores. It defies categorisation. He describes his music as ‘not being about “avant-garde” or “traditional”, nor about East or West, nor about simplicity or complexity. It is a path towards reconciliation of my own personal past and present, and a quest for human roots. It is music for and about people.’

And while he has said that he ‘travels the world absorbing its cultures’, it is the folk music of his youth and especially of his Hunan roots which informs everything he writes. One of his most recent works, *Nu Shu*, composed in 2013, was inspired by the secret sung language of Hunan women. In writing the work he paid many visits to isolated communities, much of his energies devoted to gaining the trust of women who had historically been persecuted and imprisoned for using their unique gender-specific language. As he said in an interview before a performance of the work at the opening of the current concert season of the Hong Kong Philharmonic: ‘When I arrived, they tried to hide themselves. They had suffered so much.’ The result is a fascinating piece for orchestra and solo harp which, in an ingenious juxtaposition of anthropology, musicology, history and philosophy, accompanies 13 micro-films shot by the composer on location.

Beyond the influence of his native Hunan Province, Tan identifies Stravinsky and Bartók as being significant to his work as a composer, especially now that his attention seems to be increasingly drawn towards orchestral music. In recent years he has also taken on a more active role as an orchestral conductor, which represents something of a return to his early career. ‘At the very beginning I focused on both composing and conducting, but then switched to composing. Latterly, I have started conducting more. I don’t always conduct my own music – I have conducted Britten, Ligeti, Cage, Stravinsky – and I believe that to play music and to write music is the total quality of making music. You need to learn how to write from conducting and how to conduct from writing. That’s how Britten, Mahler and Bernstein were the great models for making music.’

The influences may be many and varied, and the music truly global in its scope and vision, but even now that he is not just the best-known of all Asian composers but one of the most famous of all living composers, Tan Dun recognises the debt of gratitude he owes to that inspirational teacher who first encouraged him not just to rattle the bars of his cage, but to break right out of it and make his stamp on the world. 

TAN DUN ON DISC

Four recordings introducing Tan Dun’s musical voice



Concerto for Orchestra. Symphonic Poem on Three Notes. Orchestral Theatre

Hong Kong PO / Tan Dun

Naxos (3/13)

‘My most favourite recording of my work.

Those three pieces are representations of my status now as a conductor and a composer. That’s how I want people to see me as a musician.’ (Tan Dun)



Marco Polo

Soloists; Netherlands CO / Tan Dun

Opus Arte 

To a libretto by Paul Griffiths about the legendary explorer, Tan Dun’s music draws on a wide variety of resources to recreate the journeys between East and West.



Water Passion After St Matthew

RIAS Chamber Choir, Berlin / Tan Dun

Sony Classical

Written to mark the 250th anniversary of the death of JS Bach (a composer of whom Tan Dun never heard until he was into his twenties), the work presents a re-telling of the Passion story as seen through the filter of a culture where water holds mystical properties.



Out of Peking Opera. Death and Fire - Dialogue with Paul Klee. Orchestral Theatre II: Re for divided orchestra, bass voice and audience with two conductors

Cho-Liang Lin *vn* Kalevi Olli *bass*

Helsinki PO / Kari Kropus & Muhai Tang

Online (9/98)

As Martyn Harry wrote in *Gramophone*, ‘starting with a straight quotation from a famous, even banal Peking opera tune, Tan Dun executes a beautifully judged transition into a musical world that owes much to the violin concertos of Berg, Bartók and Shostakovich.’

Vocal



Alexandra Coghlan on Magdalena Kožená's new Monteverdi album

'Zefiro torna is rather sprightlier, with vivid solo contributions from Kožená's instrumentalists' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 104**



Richard Wigmore reviews Thomas Oliemans's *Dichterliebe*:

'The baritone is sensitive and specific in his responses, and can distil a rapt tenderness when singing softly' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 105**

JS Bach • Peranda

'Lutheran Masses, Vol 2'

JS Bach Masses – BWV233^a; BWV234^b

Peranda Missa^c

^{ab}Hana Blažiková, ^cJoanne Lunn, ^cAki Matsui *sops*

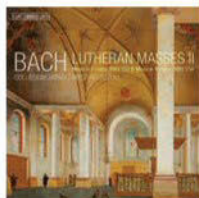
Robin Blaze *countertenor* ^bKatsuhiko Nakashima,

^cGerd Türk, ^cYusuke Fujii *tens* ^{ab}Peter Kooij,

^cDominik Wörner *basses*

Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki

BIS (P) BIS2121 (72' • DDD/DSD • T/U)



The temptation for Masaaki Suzuki to regard the four short Masses as a

mopping-up exercise after the conclusion of his 20-year traversal of the complete cantatas would be understandable.

History might encourage such a view since scholars until recently saw these four 'parody' Masses – of which the G major and minor works appeared as Vol 1 last year (9/15) – as poor relations to their original cantata sources. Suzuki, fortunately, resists all such suggestions.

Alongside Philippe Herreweghe and Raphaël Pichon's exceptional versions, this reading reaffirms the truism that, however pragmatic, Bach was never glib. These adaptations provide insights into both the composer's astute selection policy of movements, those he valued enough to recast, and the skill with which he transformed a German rhetorical world seamlessly into convincing and relatively ritualised Latin Mass settings. It requires, though, a good deal of amnesia for seasoned Bachians to forget the striking dialogue of Christ and his disciples in BWV68 ('Halt im Gedächtnis'), now almost unbelievably redeployed to accentuate the contrasting sentiments of the *Gloria* in the A major Mass.

The Bach Collegium Japan alight on the aesthetic of the new liturgical context with supreme eloquence in both of these works. Suzuki judges the pacing with quiet authority, promoting a generous phraseology where voices and instruments cohabit with a glorious quasi-nonchalance.

The F major *Kyrie* – often over-pointed in its *stilo antico* provenance or tiringly luminous – is wonderfully comfortable in its skin, with freely evolving articulation and firm, directed bass-lines.

The solos, too, patiently narrate the text through the artful and reliable Peter Kooij 8in the 'Domine Deus' of the same work and most memorably in the centrepiece of the A major Mass, the 'Qui tollis'. Here, with two flutes in as ravishing and tender a supplication as you'll ever hear, Hana Blažiková reveals herself to be among the finest of modern-day Bachians, gleaming and otherworldly.

Especially in his final two decades in Leipzig, Bach drew increasingly on the musical resources of his forebears and contemporaries, though his knowledge of Peranda's Mass in A derives from his years in Weimar. Such is the competence of the contrapuntal work, it is no wonder the ever-receptive Bach copied out the parts. BCJ's performance is slightly sullied by some intermittent choral flatness. I may jettison this work on my iPod but not the two Masses, which are among the finest recorded. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Bach Masses – selected comparisons:

Pygmalion, Pichon (3/14) (ALPH) ALPHA816

Collegium Vocale Gent, Herreweghe (ERAT) 628481-2

Brahms • Britten • Schumann

'Liederkreis'

Brahms Deutsche Volkslieder, WoO33 –

No 6, Da unten im Tale; No 40, Ich weiss mir'n

Maidlein hübsch und fein. In stiller Nacht,

WoO34 No 8 **Britten** The Ash Grove. Down

by the Salley Gardens. How Sweet the Answer.

The Last Rose of Summer. The Trees They

Grow So High **Schumann** Liederkreis, Op 39

Plus extemporisations

Anna Lucia Richter *sop* **Michael Gees** *pf*

Challenge Classics (P) CC72687 (77' • DDD • T/U)



Here is an unusual proposition. Anna Lucia Richter and her accompanist, Michael

Gees, offer a recital of songs by Schumann, Brahms and Britten, but with the songs mixed up in a single sequence and interspersed with improvisations on texts by Eichendorff. The booklet makes the point that a musical soirée in the 19th century would have been more varied than today's song recitals, though the justification for this particular layout and combination of composers is rather thin. Discussing Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op 39, the backbone of the programme, the artists talk of the cycle being held together by 'a dreamer's logic', and dreaming certainly seems to be the order of the day. Anna Lucia Richter's beguiling, light soprano floats limpidly through the air, a thing of evanescent beauty. Gees accompanies her with hypersensitivity, rhythms and harmonies blending in an over-pedalled soft focus.

There can be few performances of Schumann's Op 39 that feel so abstracted. A good half of the songs are lost in reverie – 'Mondnacht' shimmering in a silvery light, the second 'In der Fremde' gossamer-light, almost effete. An extreme point is reached with 'Wehmut', sung at a painstakingly slow pace (Schumann does admittedly say *Sehr langsam*) as though in a trance. It comes as no surprise to find the Brahms and Britten folksongs also very withdrawn, though Richter's English is good and the Britten songs rise to more open-hearted climaxes. The arcs of radiant tone in 'The Salley Gardens' feel like the disc's high point.

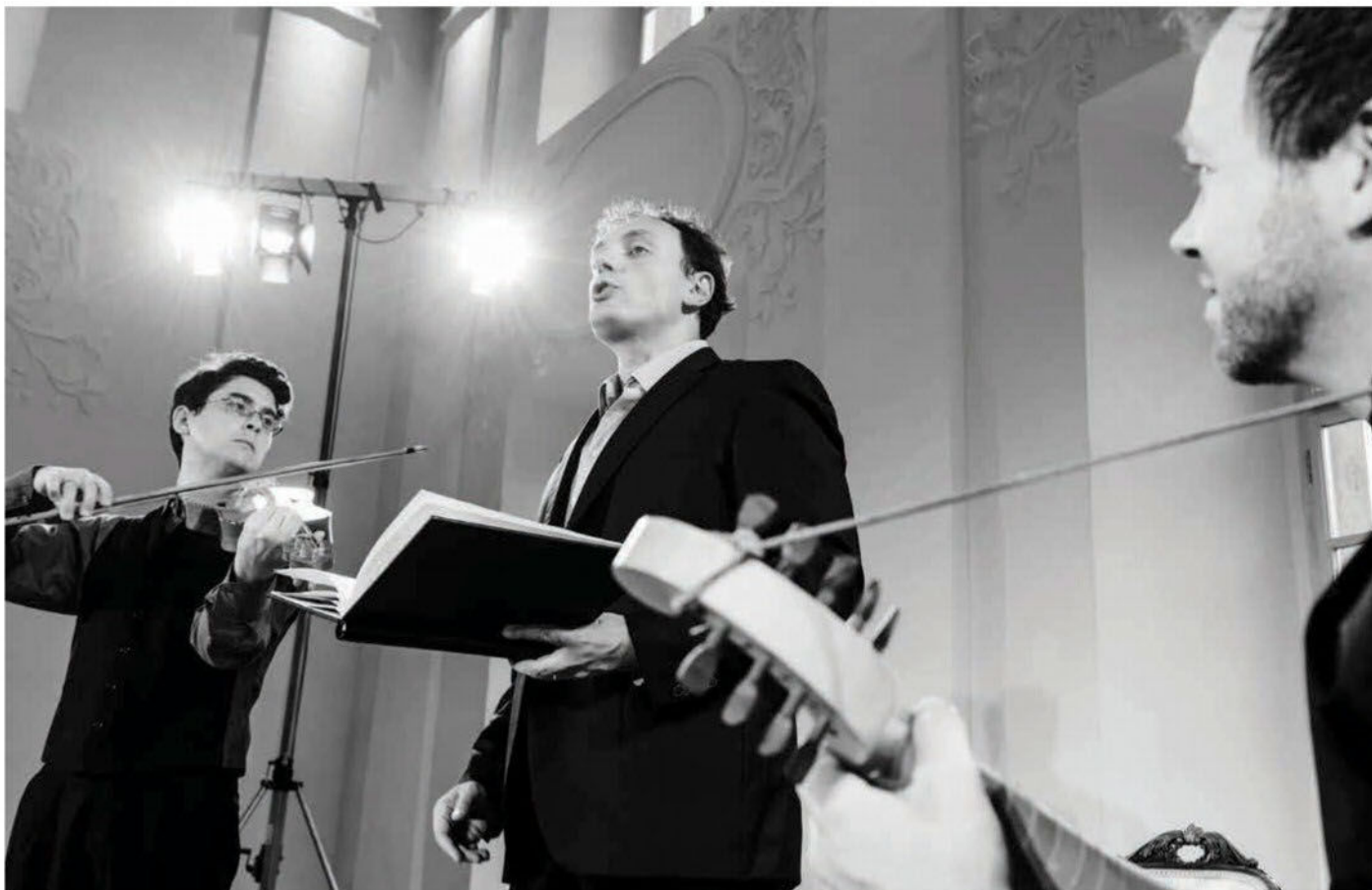
The 'extempore' tracks that intervene, the last of them emerging without a break from the Schumann, wrap everything in their own mist, at least until the more dramatic involvement of the final couple. It all adds up to a strange experience, not unpleasant as such, but distinctly enervating. **Richard Fairman**

Braunfels

'Selected Songs'

Sechs Gesänge^a – Op 1; Op 4. Fragmente eines Federspiels, Op 7^b. Neues Federspiel, Op 7^b.

Musik zu Shakespeares Komödie 'Was Ihr wollt', Op 11^a. Nachklänge Beethovenscher Musik, Op 13^a. Klärchen-Lieder, Op 29^b. An die Parzen,



Le Miroir de Musique explore the music of the shadowy 'brothers' Arnold and Hugo de Lantins (review on page 103)

Op 27 No 1^a. Zwei Lieder, Op 44^b. Herbstgefühl^b

^bMarlis Petersen *sop* Konrad Jarnot *bar*

Eric Schneider *pf*

Capriccio © C5251 (70' • DDD • T)



Walter Braunfels's career took flight, almost literally, with the composition of his 1920 opera *The Birds*, based on Aristophanes's comedy. In the two years that followed, Munich alone hosted 50 performances of the piece and Einstein was one of many who approved. 'There's an imperative at work here,' he wrote, 'which calls for comparison with Wagner's *Meistersinger* and Pfitzner's *Palestrina*.'

Einstein soon left Germany, and if Braunfels was able to keep to his house on Lake Constance, professionally his career was terminated by the Nazis (his father was born Jewish). Like many composers of a tuneful Straussian bent – but without Strauss's clout – Braunfels then lived to see his music dismissed a second time, dwindling to obscurity during the post-war rush to Darmstadt.

This virtually complete collection of Braunfels's Lieder is perhaps not the place

to start if the composer is new to you. As a mature artist he barely touched Lieder, so these songs are nearly all early works. The scholarly collection also includes two versions of the same suite, a *Federspiel* ('game with feathers') drawn from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and itself a sort of run-up to *The Birds*. As delivered by Marlis Petersen, with sparkly tone but unbirdlike intelligence, these are affectionate studies of avian life, from the obvious Lieder staples (nightingale, turtle dove) to more exotic species (hoopoe, siskin, wagtail), but you will need a large German dictionary to tell your bullfinch from your great tit, as there are no translated texts with the CD. Here the piano line (Eric Schneider, crisp and forthright) pecks around the voice with skilful charm.

Sterner tasks are handed to the baritone Konrad Jarnot. You could slot Braunfels into a little charted zone between Richard Strauss and Karl Amadeus Hartmann for these angular yet lyrical settings, and Jarnot finds longing and intensity in the Op 1 song 'Die stillen Kähne' and a lovely setting of Hölderlin ('Abbitte') in the *Sechs Gesänge*, Op 4. Elsewhere, you wish Braunfels upgraded more of his appetising fragments into more satisfying main courses. The exceptions prove the rule, including the Straussian 'Herbstgefühl',

silky served up by Petersen, and Jarnot's grizzled 'An die Parzen', where the brooding dissonance recalls Wagner's *Klingsor*. These two form a better epilogue to the album than the wispy miniatures of the *Zwei Lieder*, Braunfels's 1932 farewell to the genre. Perhaps he saw that soon there wouldn't be much to sing about.

Neil Fisher

Grigorjeva

'Nature morte – Works for Chamber

Choir and Chamber Ensembles'

Svjatki. Salve regina^a. Diptych.

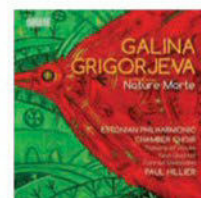
Lament^b. Nature morte. In paradisum

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir /

Paul Hillier with ^bConrad Steinmann *rec*

^aTheatre of Voices; ^aYxus Quartet

Ondine © ODE1245-2 (66' • DDD • T/t)



This new album from the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir reinforces their position as one of the world's leading vocal ensembles. Paul Hillier directs them through a deeply satisfying survey of music by the Ukrainian-born Estonian composer

Galina Grigorjeva (b1962). Stylistically, she follows in the long shadow of Rachmaninov, bracing an essential serenity with the subtlest of richer harmonic tints, while stretching her singers both emotionally as well as in terms of their tessitura (oh, those basses!). She is the mistress of cadential suspense, a modernist who respects the past.

Thanks to the swimmingly resonant acoustic of Tallinn's Niguliste Church, the slow music comes off best, especially the shimmering arch-shaped *In paradisum* of 2012. Three settings from Joseph Brodsky's *Nature morte* form the core of the recital (and provide the disc's title). Composed in 2008 and sung in English, they include some atmospheric extended vocal techniques, in addition to paper-rustling.

In the disc's most recent work, the haunting *Salve regina* of 2013, the four singers who comprise Theatre of Voices are complemented by the Yxus Quartet. Here, clustered vibrato-free chords, supported by long cello drones, enhance a slow chant-like melody which grows ever more impassioned, embellished by high, sliding violin harmonics. Another highlight is the setting of the *Nunc dimittis* and an Orthodox lament. Finer male voice choir singing will be hard to find.

As a bonus there is the astonishing *Lament* (2000) for solo recorder, a musical aviary played by Conrad Steinmann, a *tour de force* of virtuoso technique and something that all serious students of the recorder should hear and then attempt to emulate. Strongly recommended on all counts. **Malcolm Riley**

Handel

Israel in Ägypten, HWV54 (arr Mendelssohn)

Lydia Teuscher, **Julia Doyle** *sops* **Hilary Summers** *contr* **Benjamin Hulett** *ten* **Roderick Williams** *bass*

Choir of The King's Consort; The King's Consort / Robert King

Vivat Ⓟ 2 VIVAT111 (82' • DDD • T/t)



'In this oratorio Handel saved his successors trouble by writing his own additional accompaniments,' noted Winton Dean in his classic *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (OUP: 1959). Not that this deterred Mendelssohn when he mounted *Israel in Egypt* in Düsseldorf in 1833. With no available organ or harpsichord, he rescored the 'dry' recitatives for two cellos and double bass, adding a few linking recitatives of his own. The grandly scored choruses acquired extra woodwind

and horns, while a pair of clarinets infiltrated the arias and duets. Mendelssohn's reverence for Handel, and his innate fastidiousness, ensured that it was all done with taste and discretion – arguably more so than in Mozart's version of *Messiah*. Beyond his rescoring, Mendelssohn jettisoned four choruses (most regrettably the splendidly lugubrious 'He loathed to drink of the river') and the bass duet 'The Lord is a man of war', and reallocated a couple of the arias to different voices.

Mendelssohn's 1833 performing score of *Israel in Ägypten*, as it became, has survived only in fragments, most of them in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. For performances in the 2014 Leipzig Mendelssohn Festival, and this new recording, Robert King has skilfully reconstructed Mendelssohn's own reconstruction, abetted by a crack 36-strong British choir and a cosmopolitan 'period' orchestra using early-19th-century principles and techniques. In the absence of a Handelian overture, Mendelssohn revised his own early *Trumpet Overture*, in which intimations of *The Hebrides* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* jostle with bouts of neo-Handelian counterpoint. If it makes a rather too jolly prelude to the cries of the suffering Israelites, the overture is an exuberantly inventive piece, played here with terrific verve and clarity of texture.

With his vast Handelian experience, King ensures that Handel's mighty series of choral frescoes emerge in all their brilliance and incisiveness, aided by a carefully judged choral-orchestral balance. The pastoral 'Aber mit seinem Volke' (aka 'But as for his people') here lacks an ideal airy lilt. But the singers and players respond with sadistic relish to the various plagues conjured up by Jehovah at his most repulsively rampant, using the hardness of the German consonants to heighten the cruelty of 'Er schlug alle Erstgeburt' ('He smote all the first-born'). The choir finds the perfect shrouded tone for the Stygian 'Er sandte dicke Finsternis' ('He sent a thick darkness', where Mendelssohn's low-pitched flutes and horns add an evocative new colour), and musters an impressive weight and depth of sonority for the *terribilità* of 'Das hören die Völker' ('The people shall hear').

Of the uniformly fine soloists, Roderick Williams has fun with the reallocated 'frog' aria, egged on by gleefully hopping violins and croaking clarinet. The pure-toned sopranos combine gracefully in the duet 'Der Herr ist mein Heil' ('The Lord is my strength'), tenor Benjamin Hulett is a keen storyteller in his recitatives, and contralto Hilary Summers sings the assuaging

'Bringe sie hinein' ('Thou shalt bring them in') with mingled gravity and warmth. In sum, a vividly realised snapshot of a fascinating historical moment, its attractions enhanced by a lavishly produced booklet containing detailed notes by King and Mendelssohn scholar Larry Todd.

Richard Wigmore

Heinichen

'Italian Cantatas & Concertos'

Oboe Concerto, S237. Violin Concerto, S224.

La bella fiamma, S183^a. *Intorno a quella rosa*, S171^a. *Lascia di tormentarmi*, S149^b. *Se mai, Tirsi, mio bene*, S180^c

^{bc} **Marie Friederike Schöder** *sop* ^{ac} **Terry Wey**

counterten **Batzdorf Hofkapelle**

Accent Ⓟ ACC24309 (71' • DDD • T)

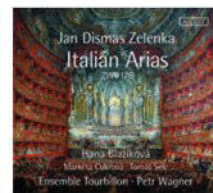
Zelenka

Italian Arias, ZWV176

Hana Blažiková *sop* **Markéta Cukrová** *contr*

Tomáš Šelc *bass-bar* **Ensemble Tourbillon / Petr Wagner** *va da gamba*

Accent Ⓟ ACC24306 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Augustus the Strong's convenient conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1697 enabled the Elector of Saxony to become the King of Poland, and the artistic culture of the Dresden court became increasingly defined by Italianate tastes. Accordingly, a distinguished host of illustrious musicians were employed in the Saxon capital. Johann David Heinichen (1683–1729) had trained and worked in Leipzig before gaining broader experience during six years in Italy. It was during the Prince-Elector of Saxony's visit to Venice that he was sufficiently impressed by Heinichen's Arcadian-style cantatas to persuade his father to recruit the composer as the new Dresden kapellmeister.

The enterprising Batzdorf Hofkapelle perform four of these cantatas. Marie Friederike Schöder's gentle singing, a pair of pastoral recorders and whispering pizzicato strings depict the vulnerable plaints of an afflicted lover in *Lascia di tormentarmi*. Terry Wey's delicate singing in *La bella fiamma* (Venice, 1711) is accompanied by elaborate theorbo obbligato parts played deftly by Stephan Rath. Both singers join forces for a dialogue between the lovers Clori and Tirsi in *Se mai, Tirsi, mio bene* – a cantata that is longer, more poetically varied and full of finely crafted music. The diligently planned programme is enriched by a Vivaldian oboe concerto in G minor played by soloist Xenia



Robert King and The King's Consort reconstruct Mendelssohn's reimagining of Israel in Egypt

Löffler with assured fluidity, and a concise violin concerto in D performed by concertmaster Daniel Deuter with conversational dexterity.

Following Heinichen's death his duties for the Dresden royal chapel were carried out by the Bohemian-born Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745), who had been employed at the court as a violone player since about 1710. His hopes to succeed Heinichen officially led to a petition to the new elector Friedrich August II in November 1733, only a few weeks after he had composed a collection of eight Italian arias. Dedicated to the new elector, these were probably designed to demonstrate that Zelenka was capable of writing operatic-style arias despite having very little experience setting the Italian language to music. In the event, the post was given instead to Hasse, whereas the long-serving Zelenka was promoted merely to the rank of Hofkomponist.

The clever fusion of contrapuntal four-part strings and vocal virtuosity in these lengthy arias reveals his customarily quirky imagination. The plangent qualities of Hana Blažiková are beguiling in the lion's share of the arias: the melancholic melodiousness of 'Povera fede sei pur mal spesa' shows Zelenka's style to be close to the Venetians of 20 years previously, the arching phrases of 'Se ha per guida la costanza' were

modelled directly on an old opera aria by the Viennese Kapellmeister Fux, and there is livelier florid passagework aplenty in 'Senti ti voglio ancor'. Markéta Cukrová's unforced alto voice shines in two rapturous arias, such as the softly lyrical 'Non só se più vi rivedrò'. The final aria 'Son da più venti' is sung suavely by bass Tomáš Šelc. The six instrumentalists of Ensemble Tourbillon, directed by gambist Petr Wagner, support the singers with finesse. These eight arias are probably not the most accomplished music Zelenka wrote but they provide another glimpse into the rich musical culture of Dresden's golden age. **David Vickers**

Howells

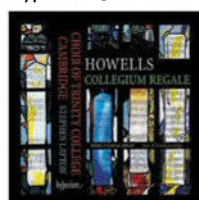
Collegium Regale. Office of Holy Communion. Behold, O God our defender. I love all beauteous things. Psalms - No 121; No 122. Rhapsody, Op 17 No 1

The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge /

Stephen Layton with Eleanor Kornas,

Owain Park *org*

Hyperion © CDA68105 (61' • DDD • T)



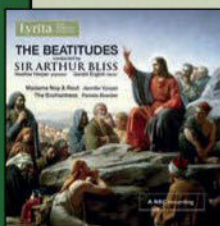
It was indeed fateful that Howells should have found himself in Cambridge during the

Second World War in order to stand in for the recently appointed St John's College organist Robin Orr, who was on active service in RAF intelligence. Having contributed little of any significance to Anglican liturgical music for two decades, Howells found the renewed experience of choral services (one he had formerly known at the cathedrals of Gloucester and Salisbury) highly amenable and invigorating. Thanks additionally to the stimulus of Dean Milner White, one of the Anglican church's great liturgical innovators, he was persuaded to write his only full setting of the Morning and Evening Canticles for King's College, Cambridge ('Collegium Regale') in 1944 and, with this, began the outpouring of anthems and service music that effectively established his reputation as a composer of church music and as a worthy successor to his teacher, Stanford.

This is a stunning recording in so many respects. Attention to dynamic detail, especially the hushed quality of the *Magnificat*, brings out the ethereal, not to say numinous character of this highly original miniature, imbued as it is with a whiff of French Impressionism. The splendid recorded sound also allows us to hear the fuller role of the tenor soloist in the *Nunc dimittis*, close surely to what Howells

Lyrita

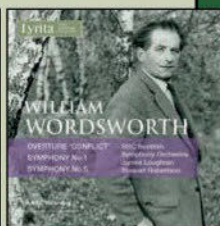
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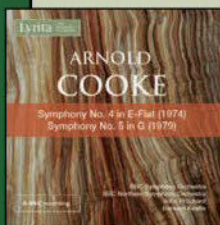
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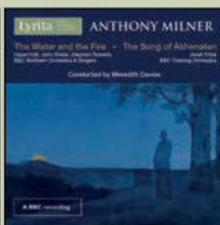
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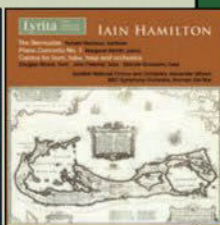
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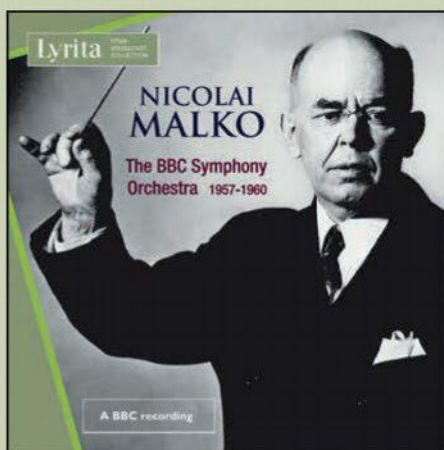


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intended as Simeon's song of joy, yet shot through with a typically English introspective melancholy. The darker, modal hues of the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* benefit from the lavish role of the Coventry Cathedral organ, especially at points of climax (with which both movements abound), while moments of more characteristic Anglican prayerfulness are shaped by Layton and the Trinity choir with true, intimate poetry. I think particularly of the *Te Deum*'s magnificent lyrical closing bars – 'O Lord, save thy people' – with its reference to plainsong and the contrapuntal intricacy of the ruminative coda 'Vouchsafe, O Lord', both of which contrast with the sublime *cri de coeur* of 'Let me never be confounded'. It is good, too, to hear the more sinewy Communion Service for King's, written almost a decade later, juxtaposed with the more fulsome post-Romantic canticles, whose material is reworked with intriguing, cyclic ingenuity.

The other two anthems on this recording, *Behold, O God our defender*, written for the 1953 Coronation, and the setting of Robert Bridges's 'I love all beauteous things' of 1977, are magical gems, sung here with tender care. And for all those devoted to art of Howells, the early psalm chants and the slightly more mature Rhapsody in D flat of 1917 (a little redolent of Parry perhaps?) provide a window into the world of the composer's apprenticeship in the organ loft.

Jeremy Dibble

Janáček

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Glagolitic Mass^a. Adagio.

Zdravas Maria^b. Otčenáš^c

^aSara Jakubiak *sop* ^aSusan Bickley *mez*

^aStuart Skelton *ten* ^aGábor Bretz *bass*

^aThomas Trotter *org* ^aChoir of Collegiūm

Músicūm; ^{ab}cEdvard Grieg Chorus; ^aBergen

Cathedral Choir; Bergen Philharmonic ^aChoir

and Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos (P) CHSA5165 (65' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



When I interviewed Edward Gardner in 2014, he expressed regret that he'd not had the opportunity to conduct any Janáček while at the helm of English National Opera. Janáček was very much the preserve of Sir Charles Mackerras. Gardner is now making up for lost time with his Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. This is the third volume in Chandos's excellent series of Janáček's orchestral works (an odd description given that the main items here

are choral), including a crackling account of the *Glagolitic Mass*.

Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* has been incredibly fortunate on disc, making it tough for newcomers to make an impression. Recent entrants include the fine Prague recording from Tomáš Netopil of the 'September 1927' version prepared by Jiří Zahrádka, slightly different from Paul Wingfield's original version as set down by Mackerras. Gardner opts for the more familiar – and tamer – revised version. Janáček scholar John Tyrrell's booklet argument for favouring this edition is that – unlike his operas *Jenůfa* and *From the House of the Dead* – Janáček undertook the revision himself, sitting in on rehearsals, and was confident in what he was doing.

The Bergen Philharmonic play splendidly and Chandos rewards them with a satisfyingly full sound. From the Introduction, ones notes the Bergen strings, warm and sweetly Viennese in flavour. Growling double basses launch the *Gospodi* (Kyrie), where woodwinds are sensitively balanced.

Gardner's brisk pacing of the *Slava* (Gloria) is joyful, bustling strings punctuated by urgent timpani. He is aided by the urgent soprano of Sara Jakubiak and the thrilling, heroic tone of Stuart Skelton. When Thomas Trotter bursts in on the organ during the *Credo*, it makes a tremendous impact, as do the foundation-shattering pedal notes in the crazed solo that constitutes the penultimate movement. The Bergen Philharmonic Choir sing the Old Slavonic texts fervently.

Like Netopil, Gardner takes the *Svet* (Sanctus) swiftly, the delicate, high string-playing most touching. Timps and brass bring unbuttoned, Sinfonietta-like joy to the Intrada, rounding off a superb performance. I wouldn't be without the more elemental Karel Ančerl (DG) or Rafael Kubelík's joyous recording (featuring the sublime soprano Evelyn Lear), but Gardner is fit to join them.

The disc contains some valuable makeweights, including a Czech *Ave Maria*. The Adagio for orchestra, thought to have been an extra overture for his opera *Šárka*, is a mournful, sombre work. A 15-minute setting of the Lord's Prayer, *Otčenáš*, was composed to raise funds for the Brno Women's Shelter. Janáček, a non-believer, was inspired by paintings by the Polish artist Józef Męcina-Krzesz illustrating the words of the prayer. It's a beautiful little score in five 'panels', scored for harp and organ. Stuart Skelton copes with the high tessitura of the tenor solos, the Bergen Cathedral Choir singing with warmth and sensitivity. **Mark Pullinger**

Glagolitic Mass – selected comparisons:

Czech PO, Ančerl (11/64⁸, 12/94⁸) (SUPR) SU3667-2

Bavarian RSO, Kubelík (7/65⁸) (DG) 463 672-2GOR

Danish Nat SO, Mackerras (12/94) (CHAN) CHAN9310

Prague RSO, Netopil (10/14) (SUPR) SU4150-2

A de Lantins · H de Lantins

'Secular Works'

A de Lantins *Amour servir et honnourer* (two versions). Ce jour de l'an, belle, je vous supply.

Hélas emy! ma dame et ma mestresse. Las, pouray je mon martire celer. Ne me vueillés belle oblier. Puisque je suy cyprianés. Puis que je voy, belle, que ne m'amés. Tota pulchra es anima mea (two versions) **H de Lantins** Celsa sublimatur victoria/Sabine, presul dignissime.

Chanter ne scay ce poyse moy. Grant ennuy m'est, tres douce simple et coye. Hélas amour, que ce qu'endure. Io sum tuo servo. Je suy exent entre aman pour amour. Mirar non posso ni conzerner. Per amor de costey. Plaindre m'estuet de ma damme jolye. Un seul confort pour mon cuer resjoir

Le Miroir de Musique /

Baptiste Romain *vielle/bagpipes*

Ricercar (P) RIC365 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Hugo and Arnold de Lantins are somewhat shadowy figures (possibly

brothers, though this is not proven) who rubbed shoulders with the young Dufay in Italy and left a small but significant body of music.

That this provides a stylistic point of reference for their more famous colleague has long been recognised by scholars, but this recording compellingly demonstrates its intrinsic quality. Working within the formal conventions of the poetry of the time, their music breathes restrained elegance and poise where the young Dufay is more often outgoing and showy. This recital focuses principally on their secular music, although the few sacred examples are just as impressive. Arnold's Song of Songs setting *Tota pulchra es* is one of the most immediately appealing things on the disc. Hugo is perhaps better known on account of the obscene acrostic of his rondeau *Plaindre m'estuet*, but his mellifluous setting of it is another standout, the all-vocal performance here every bit as communicative as that from Gothic Voices many years ago (Hyperion, 12/88), albeit entirely different in approach.

Le Miroir de Musique is one of a number of young groups led by an instrumentalist but combining voices as well. These ensembles make the case for instrumental participation in this repertory

as compellingly as Gothic Voices did for all-vocal performance, principally by being very discriminating in their choices for individual pieces. Gone is the 'everything but the kitchen sink' approach of 40 years ago; gone, too, is the mangling of poetic forms to showcase instrumental virtuosity (not to say instrumentalists' egos).

Not that these young musicians are slouches technically: an intricate unison line shared on recorder and vielle (in *Amour servir*) is flawlessly executed. The singers, as I've suggested, are on a par with them, the intricate cross-rhythms of *Je suis exent* being negotiated with distinction. This is one of the most satisfying 15th-century recordings I've heard in a while: specialist repertory that doesn't deserve to be.

Fabrice Fitch

Monteverdi

Marini Passacaglia à 4, Op 22 **Merula** Ballo detto Polliccio **Monteverdi** L'incoronazione di Poppea – Addio Roma!; Disprezzata regina; Pur ti miro^a. Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda. Con che soavità. Damigella tutta bella^a. Lamento della Ninfa^c. Quel sguardo sdegnosetto. Zefiro torna^a **Uccellini** Aria quinta sopra La Bergamasca

Magdalena Kožená mez^a **Anna Prohaska** sop

^b**David Feldman** counterten ^c**Michael Feyfar**,

^c**Jakob Pilgram** tens^{bc} ^a**Luca Tittoto** bass **La Cetra**

Baroque Orchestra, Basel / **Andrea Marcon** hpd

Archiv © 479 4595AH (77' • DDD • T/t)



It's been a while since we've heard Magdalena Kožená in Baroque repertory.

Her previous recordings of music from the period, 'Ah! mio cor' (11/07) and 'Lettere amorose' (A/10), all show the mezzo at her absolute best – unforced tone, excellent colleagues, with some kick-up-your-skirts fun from the latter we've yet to see repeated – setting hopes high for her new Monteverdi. But after flirtations with Mahler, Debussy and Ravel, can she still go home, musically speaking?

Up to a point. Kožená teams up with crack period band La Cetra, whose virtuoso solo contributions are a delight, yet the voice isn't quite what it was – more diffuse, painting with broader tonal brushstrokes. Here in Monteverdi that proves itself, at times, an advantage, giving greater scope to Octavia's emotionally charged *accompagnato* recitatives from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and helping to colour and sustain the dramatic narrative of *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*.

But we do also lose something. Although singing early repertoire, Kožená's stylistic choices seem at times deliberately anachronistic. In attempting to give the *Lamento della Ninfa* tragic, Romantic weight, Kožená slows it down almost to a standstill, obliterating the stately dance rhythms that underpin its complaints, and leaving her continuo group struggling to spread their chords any slower. The same approach brings little to the *Poppea* duet 'Pur ti miro'; what should be sensual interweavings between the voices become a ponderous and emotionally inert coupling, despite the lovely contributions of soprano Anna Prohaska. *Zefiro torna* is, thankfully, rather sprightlier, with vivid solo contributions from Kožená's instrumentalists, but still not a patch on L'Arpeggiata's ecstatic, whirlwind of a recording (Erato, 6/09).

I also question Kožená's decision to sing all three roles in *Il combattimento*. Yes, there's precedent, but unlike, for example, Bryn Terfel's *Don Giovanni* baritones, characterisation here is harder won and the result tends to be somewhat undifferentiated, losing rather than gaining from a single singer. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Nielsen

Der er et yndigt land (A fair and lovely land). Hjemve, 'Underlige aftenlufter' (Homesickness, 'Odd and unknown evening breezes'). To skolesange (Two School Songs). Sidskensang, 'Du er, min tro, en underlig pøg' (Siskin Song, 'You are, in truth, a curious pet'). Serenade, 'Gerne vi lytter, når strængene bringer' (Serenade, 'Gladly we listen when music may carry'). Jeg bærer med smil min byrde (I take with a smile my burden). Kom, Gudsengel, stille død (Come, God's angel, silent Death). Det bødes der for i lange år (You suffer throughout an age of pain). Aftenstemning, 'Alt skoven sig fordunkler' (Evening, 'The woods are dimly listening'). Påskeliljen, 'Påskeblomst! en dråbe stærk' (The Daffodil, 'Easter bloom! A potent drink'). Barnets sang, 'Kom, i dag må alle synge' (Children's Song, 'Come today and join the chorus'). Grøn er vårens hæk (Springtime hedge is green). Jeg ved en lærkerede (Two larks in love have nested). Solen er så rød, mor (Look! the sun is red, mum). Sangen til Danmark, 'Som en rejselysten flåde' (The Song to Denmark, 'There's a fleet of floating islands'). Cantata for the Opening Ceremony of the National Exhibition in Aarhus 1909. Fædrelandssang, 'Du danske mand! af al din magt' (Danish Patriotic Song, 'Sing, Danish man! With all your might'). Til snapsen i 'Bel Canto' (To the Schnapps in 'Bel Canto'). Den danske sang er en ung, blond pige (The Danish song is a fair young maiden). Nu sol i øst oprinder mild

(Now sun arises in the East). Jeg lægger mig så trygt til ro (In peace, I lay me down to sleep). Hjemve (Underlige aftenlufter) (Homesickness: 'Odd and unknown evening breezes'). Der er et yndigt land (A fair and lovely land)

Danish National Choirs / **Phillip Faber**, **Michael Schönwandt**, **Susanne Wendt**
Dacapo © 8 226112 (63' • DDD • T/t)



The hero of Dacapo's fourth recent recording of Nielsen's

ensemble songs isn't so much the composer himself as DR, the state broadcaster that brought you *Borgen* and *The Killing*, and whose comprehensive upward-feeding choral system is profiled in its entirety here.

Still, hats off to Michael Schönwandt for taking care of 17 of the 25 numbers recorded, and for making so much of every little nuance in Nielsen's often simple writing as only he can. In the largely (but not completely) homophonic works sung by the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, the permanent radio choir, Schönwandt finds that bit more shape and shade than Michael Bojesen's more direct performances with Ars Nova Copenhagen (6/15). It all comes from Schönwandt's feeling for text, which itself takes care of occasionally more tricky contrapuntal textures in such pieces as *Sidskensang*. To be churlish, there are some slight wobbles in tuning in *Kom, Gudsengel, stille død* and, later on, some of the nationalistic songs can bristle in rumbustious performances from the Concert Choir's men's voices (the effect of Nielsen's drinking song *Til snapsen i 'Bel Canto'* spilling over, perhaps).

Which is precisely why the children's voices prove such a tonic. Like the Vocal Ensemble, the Girls' Choir (ages 16-21) has a regular TV slot in Denmark, and if it doesn't quite engage with its text like its adult counterpart, it is bright-sounding, alert and technically bang-on under its charismatic guiding light Philip Faber. Next to their seniors, all clipped like English cathedral girl choristers but with a touch more body, the Childrens' (ages 9-11) and Junior (ages 12-16) choirs sound thrillingly open, a joyousness in their voices that suits Nielsen's musical intentions down to the ground. Denmark is singing very well indeed, and with a system like this, will continue to do so.

Andrew Mellor



'A song recital of considerable stature': Christoph Prégardien and Julius Drake's 'Poetisches Tagebuch' on Challenge Classics

Schubert

'Poetisches Tagebuch'

An mein Herz, D860. Auf der Bruck, D853. Dass sie hier gewesen, D775. Du bist die Ruh, D776. Fischerweise, D881. Greisengesang, D778. Im Frühling, D882. Im Jänner 1817 (Tiefes Leid), D876. Im Walde, D834. Im Walde (Waldesnacht), D708. Lebensmut, D883. Der liebliche Stern, D861. Nacht und Träume, D827. Totengräbers Heimweh, D842. Über Wildemann, D884. Um Mitternacht, D862. Der Winterabend, D938

Christoph Prégardien *ten* **Julius Drake** *pf*

Challenge Classics ©  CC72670

(73' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Christoph Prégardien is still one of the finest, most thoughtful

Lieder singers active today, and this new recital, presenting nine settings of Ernst Schulze alongside 'eight songs to favourite poets' is a typically considered affair. And what becomes immediately clear is that the tenor, though his voice has lost some of its honeyed

bloom with the passing of the years, is a master of marshalling his still considerable resources. Some phrases fail to fill out in the way one would ideally like, admittedly, but the artistry is never in doubt: one soon forgets about the former and simply marvels at the latter, defined by a naturally communicative and open-hearted way with the words and a quiet, natural sensitivity.

The tenor also benefits from superlative support from Julius Drake. Well captured in a wide, realistic sonic picture, Drake is responsive and intelligent, his playing full of detail but never stealing the limelight. Listen, for example, to the wonderful bounce he brings to 'Lebensmuth', the way he turns 'Im Walde' (the Schlegel setting on track 13) into a miniature tone-poem, or the delicacy he conjures up in 'Im Frühling', matched, incidentally, by some wonderfully artless singing from Prégardien.

The programme is also cleverly assembled, with the more predominantly through-composed second half bringing extra variety just before the (quasi-)strophic Schulze songs start to overstay their welcome. Matters grow increasingly introverted and thoughtful as we progress,

too: 'Im Jänner', with its hints – as Richard Wigmore suggests in his booklet-note – of *Winterreise*, feels like the moment when the melancholy hinted at early in the disc becomes more pronounced. Then, in the second half, we have some real gems. 'Nacht und Träume' and the opening of 'Du bist die Ruh' are floated with with a disarming lightness, the latter's heart-stopping climax realised with urgency. 'Greisengesang' has an imposing, moving seriousness, as do the substantial final two songs, the masterful performances of which leave you in no doubt that this is a song recital of considerable stature. **Hugo Shirley**

Schumann

Dichterliebe, Op 48. Sechs Gedichte und Requiem, Op 90. Sechs Gesänge, Op 89

Thomas Oliemans *bar* **Paolo Giacometti** *fp*

Channel Classics © CCS38416 (62' • DDD • T/t)



'An exceptionally fine singer', noted the much-missed John Steane in his review

of Thomas Oliemans's *Schwanengesang* (Etcetera, 3/11), while being intermittently perturbed by 'a layer of hardness, impurity' above *mezzo-forte*. In this new *Dichterliebe* the Dutch baritone is sensitive and specific in his responses, and can distil a rapt tenderness when singing softly. Yet, even more than Steane, I'm troubled by the hardness – 'grittiness' was my own immediate reaction – when he puts any pressure on his tone. The harsh, even strained climax of the penultimate 'Aus alten Märchen' is a case in point. Oliemans has obviously pondered deeply Schumann's cycle of awakened love and disillusion, and offers many moments of illumination, not least his musing inwardness, with a gentle pointing of 'der Liebsten genau' at the close of 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome'.

Like Gerald Finley on his *Gramophone* Award-winning recording (Hyperion, 11/08), Oliemans sings the cycle in the past tense, emphasising nostalgia and resignation. But his chosen tempi tend to be even slower, provocatively so in the opening 'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai', sung as if through a gauze of tears, and 'Hör ich ein Liedchen klingen'. This latter song should surely have an insidiously disturbing undertow, rising to near-violence in the piano postlude. Here the mood remains one of wistful melancholy.

Like Oliemans, pianist Paolo Giacometti can short-change the cycle's scorn and ironic bitterness. But he draws some delicious sonorities from his Conrad Graf fortepiano of c1830, as in the hazy fronds of arpeggios that envelop the voice in 'Ich will meine Seele tauchen'. For the Op 89 and Op 90 songs, from Schumann's creative autumn, Giacometti moves to an overtone-rich Streicher fortepiano whose resonance can further blur Schumann's dense chromatic textures in such songs as 'Es stürmt am Abendhimmel', from the rarely heard Op 89 set, and 'Einsamkeit'. Provisos about Oliemans's grittiness at *mf* and above remain. But in the main he is a sympathetic, often moving advocate of these fragile songs of transience and disenchantment, whether in the plaintive 'Heimliches Verschwinden', the wistful – and very Chopinesque – 'Röselein, Röselein' (the fortepiano's bell-like treble enchantingly heard here), or the justly popular 'Meine Rose', truly *innig*, as Schumann requests.

Richard Wigmore

'Amuse-bouche'

'French Choral Delicacies'

Daniel-Lesur *La cantique des cantiques*

Françaix *Ode à la gastronomie* Milhaud *Deux*

Poèmes Poulenc *Hôtel. Sept Chansons. Un soir de neige* Ravel *Piano Concerto in G - Adagio* (arr R Williams) Satie *Gnossiennes - No 4; No 5; No 6*

I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth with

Anna Markland *pf*

Decca © 478 9394 (81' • DDD • T/t)



Sensuality doesn't so much ooze as burst in ecstatic, convulsive spasms

from I Fagiolini's latest recording. If it weren't for the imagination of the programming and the bold, cheeky intelligence that guides the choice and juxtaposition of repertoire, then 'Amuse-bouche' – the group's homage to all things French – would be frankly indecent.

As it is, the collection is the very best kind of musical pleasure, and one rather more substantial and enduring than the title might suggest. Robert Hollingworth and his singers roam widely across 20th-century France, through works by Poulenc, Ravel, Satie and Milhaud, but also pausing at two larger works – Jean Françaix's genre-defying *Ode à la gastronomie* (recorded here for the first time) and Jean-Yves Daniel-Lesur's choral song-cycle *Le Cantique des Cantiques*.

Pleasure dominates both works. For Françaix it's the delights of the stomach that preoccupy him as he pricks the pompous, ballooning belly of French gastronomy in his satirical, surrealist reworking of Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *La physiologie du goût*. I Fagiolini bring all the madrigalian clarity and responsive, soloistic singing of their early music performances to this contemporary repertoire, catching the wit and the filth of Françaix's extended musical joke in all its truffle-infused glory.

Only a tiny palate cleanser – Satie's Fourth *Gnossienne*, delicately performed, as all of the piano works here, by Anna Markland – separates this extraordinary oddity from the purer ecstasies of Daniel-Lesur's series of Song of Songs settings. While The Sixteen's 1996 recording achieves a misty fragility, I Fagiolini's 12 solo voices give the work an operatic freedom and scope that makes sense of these fragrant texts and their amplified emotions.

Poulenc's chilly and chilling *Un soir de neige* cuts deliciously against the shifting, ambiguous sensuality and languor of Milhaud's *Deux Poèmes*, where a vocal quartet provides sudden intensity after

so many denser works. The album closes with a second premiere recording – of a new arrangement by Roderick Williams of the *Adagio* from Ravel's Piano Concerto in G for solo piano and voices, who take up the orchestral lines. It's a fascinating idea and elegantly executed by Williams, who manages both to preserve and to reinvent.

'Amuse-bouche' marks I Fagiolini's 30th anniversary. It's in keeping with Hollingworth and his agile, chameleon-like group that, instead of the inevitable greatest hits album, we get something entirely fresh and unexpected, a recording that's a bit sexy, a bit silly and absolutely, unmissably superb.

Alexandra Coghlan

Daniel-Lesur – selected comparison:

Sixteen, Christophers (11/96^R) (CORO) COR16023

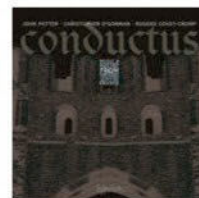
'Conductus, Vol 3'

Anonymous *A globo veteri. A l'entrant del tans salvage. Eclipsim passus totiens. Fas et nefas. Homo, natus ad laborem. Olim sudor Herculis. O qui fontem gratie. Per dan que d'amor mi veigna. Sede, Syon, in pulvere. Transgressus legem Domini. Vite perditte*

John Potter, Christopher O'Gorman,

Rogers Covey-Crump *ters*

Hyperion © CDA68115 (62' • DDD • T/t)



In the third and last of their issues of 13th-century conductus arising

from an AHRC research project at the University of Southampton, John Potter, Christopher O'Gorman and Rogers Covey-Crump once again endorse their awesome reputation as unchallenged singers of this repertoire. And the selection of pieces adds generously to what was already available. As a novelty in this issue, two songs in Provençal are added: they both have the same melody as the lower voice of one of the two-voice conducti on this disc; nobody knows which was composed first but it is quite clear that the results can be bizarrely different.

Now that all three discs are available, though, it becomes easier to see that the set represents two basic views that have their adherents but may lessen the enjoyment to be gained here. First, that music of the 13th century is quite unlike later music in that it doesn't reflect the content of its texts: thus the song of open seduction in *Al entrant del tans salvage* sounds not much different from the song of unrequited love (with the same melody), *Per dan que d'amor mi veigna*, and so on. The second concerns the notation



'A bit sexy, a bit silly and absolutely, unmissably superb': I Fagiolini mark their 30th anniversary in sensuous style

of the melismatic (*sine littera*) sections and the syllabic ones (*cum littera*). I need to get technical here, but it seems important so that listeners understand why some of the music is a touch boring. Again and again in the conductus repertory, the *sine littera* sections are in regular ligatures that are easily read in the 'rhythmic modes' described by the theorists; by contrast, the *cum littera* sections appear in the manuscripts in equal note-values. For years, it was concluded logically enough that the metrical structure established in the *sine littera* sections should be continued in the *cum littera* sections. But as of about 30 years ago scholars began to doubt this. So the present set jerks from the lilting rhythms of the *sine littera* sections to an equisyllabic presentation of the text sections. To my ear this almost always makes no sense. That is not to say that the entire conductus repertory must be interpreted in the same way. But it is to say that somehow the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater.

David Fallows

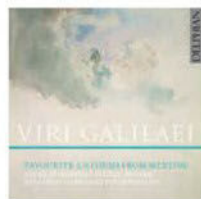
'Viri Galilaei'

'Favourite Anthems from Merton'

Byrd Ave verum corpus³. Diliges Dominum

Dove Te Deum Elgar Give unto the Lord Finzi Lo, the full, final sacrifice Gowers Viri Galilaei WH Harris Faire is the heaven Morley Nolo mortem peccatoris³ Parry Blest pair of sirens Quilter Lead us, heavenly Father Rutter The Lord bless you and keep you Tallis If ye love me³. O nata lux³

Choir of Merton College, Oxford / Benjamin Nicholas, ²Peter Phillips with Charles Warren, Peter Shepherd org Delphian © DCD34174 (76' • DDD • T/t)



the Merton College Choir abandons a thematic programme for a selection of 'Favourite Anthems'.

Whose favourites? Well, by a happy coincidence, mine. But, more importantly, they are clearly favourites of the two conductors who bring to these performances a warm-hearted fondness which is as indefinable as it is apparent. Peter Phillips naturally shows great stylistic sympathy for Morley, Byrd and Tallis, and *If ye love*

me is performed here with deliciously expansive melodic fluidity.

Benjamin Nicholas directs compelling performances of the more modern items on the disc, including Jonathan Dove's scintillating *Te Deum* and the title-work by Patrick Gowers, with its captivating double organ accompaniment, masterfully handled by Charles Warren and Peter Shepherd. At times Nicholas's enthusiasm results in a slight loosening of the reins (as in Elgar's *Give unto the Lord*), which causes a certain blurring of the textural edges, but these perceptive performances lack for nothing in their interpretative conviction.

The Merton choir's singing is notable for its clarity. The polyphonic lines of Byrd's *Diliges Dominum*, the antiphonal effects of Harris's classic *Faire is the heaven* and even the dense textures of Parry's *Blest pair of sirens* have about them an almost glass-like transparency. If there is a flaw, it's in the slightly over-rich tone which, in Rutter's *The Lord bless you*, compromises the essential purity of this exquisite little gem.

Even if not every item is a personal favourite, this is a lovely collection of good music, well performed, beautifully sung and exquisitely recorded. Who could ask for anything more? Marc Rochester

REISSUES

Rob Cowan on two Menuhin centenary boxes, and **James Jolly** on Decca's Charles Dutoit legacy

Menuhin the master

For the 'essential Menuhin' in less than five minutes, go straight to Bloch's *Abodab* (*God's Worship*), music relayed by a composing sage to an interpreting humanist, with playing that burns the edges of the heart, a heart that cries in the blooded light of impending doom (this is the dark hour of 1939): compassionate, intensely lyrical, with meaningful rests and a rich, ripe tone. Here we're starting at the very top and, believe me, there is a good deal more to savour throughout the course of Warner Classics' dazzling 80-CD and 11-DVD journey **The Menuhin Century** (selling for about £170) that confirms Yehudi Menuhin as one of the last century's greatest. Violinists, professionals especially, will continue to shake their heads over the occasional flaws in the mature Menuhin's playing, the juddering scrape of the bow and a tone that could sound tired. The existence of such flaws cannot be denied but it's worth pointing out that a good many of Menuhin's less satisfactory recordings aren't actually included in the set. For example, the featured Bach Solo Sonatas and Partitas hail from the pre-war period (the post-war remakes could find Menuhin struggling), and the same goes for Bartók's Solo Sonata, a work that Menuhin commissioned.

Warner's achievement is supplemented by a valuable six-CD side-runner from RCA Red Seal, **Yehudi Menuhin - The Complete American Victor Recordings** (about £24) which, in addition to presenting some first releases, reinstates to the catalogue recordings of repertoire that Menuhin subsequently re-recorded. Bartók's Second Concerto under Antal Doráti (Dallas, 1946) is admirably forthright, but of the half-dozen or so extant Menuhin versions of the work that are scattered throughout recording history it's the one under Wilhelm Furtwängler (Philharmonia, 1953, chez Warner) that seems to me the most wholly responsive to Bartók's musical intentions.

Furtwängler also leads magisterial accounts of the Beethoven, Brahms and

Mendelssohn concertos, in each case drawing from Menuhin playing that is both tonally radiant and emotionally generous. But there's another memorable Brahms Concerto, an earlier concert recording from 1940 under the baton of the noted Sibelian Georg Schnévoigt, that is, if anything, even more impressive. Just listen to the taut, swingeing attack of the orchestral *tutti* that prefaces Menuhin's first entry: real brawn before the soloist engages the heart with some deeply expressed playing. It's possibly the best version we have from him of this work. Also under Schnévoigt, Bach's E major Concerto is more involving than the earlier version with Enescu, and most surprising of all is Paganini's First Concerto (same concert), a dead ringer for Menuhin's famous 1934 recording under Pierre Monteux (also included), a bewitching array of violinistic summersaults: audacious, mischievous and unapologetically heart-on-sleeve. Menuhin's later forays into this same territory were nowhere near as impressive.

The Elgar Violin Concerto captures the heart-stopping thrill of first infatuation

So how best to approach these CDs? Think in terms of an average, active lifespan, from excited childhood, through the storm and stress of full maturity, to the repose and frailty of old age. Then think of what it feels like to live each of those stages on life's way, and imagine Menuhin expressing them in terms of his playing, which is exactly what he does. Sony Classical offers us a whole CD of short pieces recorded when Menuhin was 11 or 12 years old, a time when the playing seemed totally unselfconscious: the boy Menuhin runs the gamut from playfulness (Ries's *La capricciosa*), to effortless concentration (Fiocco's *Allegro*), youthful piety (Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum* 'Prayer') and just plain showing off (a first-release 1929 Wieniawski

Scherzo tarantelle). And of course there is the awakening of love and the 16-year-old's Elgar Concerto under the composer's direction (Warner), now sounding better than ever. It's a performance that captures the heart-stopping thrill of first infatuation: while Menuhin sings from the heart, Elgar's LSO snarls a defiant accompaniment.

There are chamber works with Yehudi's beloved sister Hephzibah, whose considerable artistry became richer by the year, including two burningly intense versions of George Enescu's exotically crazed Third Sonata, while Enescu himself joins the teenage Menuhin for an eloquent Bach D minor Double Concerto and conducts solo concertos or *concertante* works by Bach, Chausson, Lalo, Mendelssohn, Wieniawski, Mozart and Dvořák, the latter's Concerto rather rushed off its feet. Better, by far, is Schumann's Concerto with John Barbirolli conducting the New York Philharmonic Symphony (1938), poignant reportage of music by a composer whose vulnerability and encroaching mental breakdown drew from Menuhin a markedly emotional response.

The DVD set included in the Warner Classics box is interesting on a number of counts. We witness Menuhin and Gennady Rozhdestvensky in concert performing Bartók's Second Concerto, Menuhin by this time sounding as old as he looks, but what you hear is what you're listening to him for – total immersion in the music's spiritual aspect and an approach to the faster music that is demonic, at times even ugly, but so real. It's fascinating to see him coach students in Bartók's First Sonata, with Viktoria Postnikova at the piano, stressing words like 'fearful' and 'gypsy', while lashing the strings with his bow. Early film of Menuhin with Adolph Baller provides an impressive showing of the virtuoso as a handsome young man before he shifted musical priorities, whether as a speed demon in Paganini's *Moto perpetuo* or as animated charmer in a real rarity,





Regular recording partners: Menuhin with his sister Hephzibah, represented on 20 discs in the Warner set

Bazzini's E minor *Waltz Calabrese*. Another filmed performance has Menuhin playing alongside a 'Symphony Orchestra' under Doráti in Mendelssohn's E minor Concerto, fairly fast but superbly played and, like the Schnéevoigt Brahms, possibly the best recording of the work that we have from him. Lack of space precludes comment on the other DVDs (some of the material has been out before), but they're all of considerable interest. Various first releases are intriguing. From Menuhin's productive middle years, Schubert's String Quintet with the likes of Cecil Aronowitz and Maurice Gendron is notable for its central movements, the *Adagio* featuring some warmly tiered string chords, the Scherzo (with repeat) engagingly rumbustious. Schubert's Octet from three years earlier is also very good, its participants including Gervase de Peyer, Archie Camden and Barry Tuckwell. Given that some of Menuhin's released recordings from the same period were more problematic, having these particular performances on ice for so long seems a mystery. The Tchaikovsky Concerto with Sir Adrian Boult (1959) harbours a touching, exquisitely voiced *Canzonetta*, and although the first movement sometimes finds soloist and orchestra in hot pursuit of each other – it's difficult to work out who's chasing whom – the finale is often quite brilliant.

Sony Classical's trawl of unreleased material includes a Beethoven *Kreutzer* Sonata that fans the flames more urgently than do any of the versions included by

Warner, though RCA's sound tends to flatten dynamics and bring everything up front. For me, the prize among Beethoven sonata recordings is the cycle that Menuhin recorded in the mid-1950s with his brother-in-law Louis Kentner at the piano (Warner), readings that combine a sense of intimacy with flexibility and a deeply musical turn of phrase. Every performance features some or other moment of magic, but if you're able to sample, try the first movement of Op 96. Menuhin and Kentner in the three Brahms sonatas are also deeply memorable.

Much 20th-century music is included: in addition to Bartók, we're offered Lennox Berkeley, Paul Ben-Haim, Berg, Copland, Frank Martin, Ravel, Ödön Pártos (a particularly impressive Concerto, convincingly played), Panufnik, Poulenc, Walton, Britten, Szymanowski, Stravinsky, Malcolm Williamson and many others. There are the Mozart recordings with Yehudi's sisters, his son Jeremy and Fou Ts'ong, and other items too where our violinist takes up the baton (Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with Hephzibah). Two crossover CDs, very different, were famous in their day: 'West Meets East' with sitar player Ravi Shankar, a communing of sorts, conceptually interesting rather than especially convincing (also available as an LP, coupled with Enescu's Third Violin Sonata with Hephzibah Menuhin), and the popular songs album 'Jealousy', where Menuhin has a brave shot at swinging with jazz-violinist Stéphane Grappelli. And while I can't fake enthusiasm for the combination

of Grappelli's cool, sweet-toned fiddling and Menuhin's over-heated efforts to keep up, you have to credit the man withchutzpah. He was game, as they say, and that counts for a great deal.

Warner Classics' presentation looks a million dollars, a solid box the size of an LP, though considerably deeper, housing six CD-size boxed sets (one of them, 'Menuhin in Film', devoted to the DVDs). The CDs are also available individually (details in listing below). And there's Bruno Monsaingeon's 252-page hardback *Passion Menuhin: The Album of a Life*, an informed, informing and often eloquent biographical commentary with a plethora of photographs featuring Menuhin in the company of his parents and family, as well as with the likes of Elgar, Enescu, Furtwängler, Shostakovich, Toscanini, Adolph Busch, Ravi Shankar, David Oistrakh and Charlie Chaplin, to name but a few.

As to the sound legacy, we're also offered sporadic spoken commentary from Menuhin himself (in French, English and German), live recordings with Pablo Casals and Eugene Istomin at Prades, Bach in Moscow with David Oistrakh, and fragments of a thrilling concert in liberated Paris (1944) with Charles Munch conducting. As you'll no doubt have guessed, I've barely scraped the surface, but one thing is for sure: a good many of these recordings, most of which have been superbly transferred, will prompt repeated listening, and, by absorbing the work of this most profoundly human and idealistic of musicians, we will likely become more human ourselves, something that in these troubled times we need to do more than ever before. **Rob Cowan**

THE RECORDINGS

The Menuhin Century

Warner Classics © (80 discs + 11)
2564 67827-4

The Menuhin Century: Unpublished Recordings and Rarities

Warner Classics © (22 discs) 2564 67778-1

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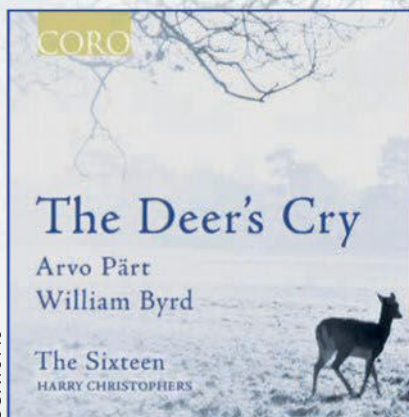
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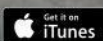


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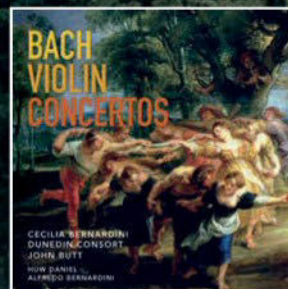
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Decca's Montreal legacy

Decca has a long history of creating partnerships with orchestras and conductors that elevated them to a new level, giving them a truly international stature. During the 1950s, the trinity of Decca, the Suisse Romande Orchestra and Ernest Ansermet – greatly assisted by the company's mastery of both Geneva's Victoria Hall and its skill at recording in stereo – became a destination for French and, to a lesser extent, Russian repertoire. Ansermet died in 1969 and for some years Decca was without a core interpreter of the French repertoire – until a chance encounter in 1980 by Decca's head of A&R and Senior Producer, Ray Minshull, with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and Charles Dutoit.

Dutoit had already been Music Director of the Canadian ensemble for three years, and was an experienced recording conductor too (he had already made discs for DG and Decca), and his repertoire was exactly what Decca was after at the time. This 35-CD set (selling for about £55) covers the 20 years of Decca orchestral recordings, a treasure-trove of colourful repertoire, recorded in superb sound in the Church of Saint-Eustache in a Montreal suburb, west of the city. It was one of the finest acoustics in which Decca ever worked, and its mastery of the space left a legacy of recordings that still sound glorious.

Dutoit can galvanise his musicians to create the intensity of a live concert just for the microphones

The relationship opened with a disc of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* ballet that took Edward Greenfield's breath away in June 1981: 'Never have I heard Ravel's score sounding quite so ravishing as on this new digital issue, not just a question of the engineers' work with its fine balancing and atmosphere, both spacious and detailed, but the playing of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. On this showing it is by far the finest French orchestra today, whatever they think in Paris.' And it ushered in a style that was to be repeated over and over for two decades.

Key scores by Debussy and Ravel, as well as Berlioz (sadly somewhat under-represented here – only the *Symphonie fantastique* and three overtures



Charles Dutoit: his Montreal legacy charts one of the great orchestra-conductor partnerships of modern times

are included) were subsequently recorded, often alternating with a rather Ansermet-like selection of colourful Russian scores (*Sheherazade*, the Stravinsky ballets, Mussorgsky's *Pictures*) and obvious pops like Respighi's Roman Trilogy, Holst's *The Planets* (a Gramophone Engineering Award-winner in 1987), Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Tchaikovsky ballets.

Dutoit is a studio 'natural'; he can galvanise his musicians to create the intensity of a live concert just for the microphones and his ear for orchestral colour always was – and still is – extraordinarily acute. Not for him a generalised French flavour – he finds a subtly different colour for each composer. I particularly like the sound world he employs for his Berlioz (which makes just the single-disc representation here a shame): too many recordings treat the *Symphonie fantastique* as an excuse for orchestral virtuosity, for showing off the ensemble's range of colour and dynamic. Dutoit, safe in the knowledge that his Montreal musicians are the equal of the best, goes down the less-is-more route, and the result is all the more powerful. There's nothing brash here; instead it's painted in colours of a more subtle palette and the unsettling, slightly crazed quality of the work comes across with considerably more impact.

For those for whom conductors such as Beecham and Paray are without equal in the insouciant, buoyant works of the French repertoire, how does Dutoit compare? The answer has to be,

very well indeed! Take a disc like 'Fête à la française', a delectable confection of Chabrier, Dukas, Satie, Saint-Saëns, Bizet, Thomas and Ibert, and you'd be hard-pressed to fault the panache and fizz that Dutoit brings; there are no compromises to be made when it comes to sound, either. And the same might be said for a purely Ibert collection, a disc of Bizet suites (*Carmen* and *L'arlesienne*) and a Suppé programme.

Other standout performances? The Saint-Saëns *Organ Symphony* with Peter Hurford, stunningly recorded; the Franck Symphony; *The Planets*; the Fauré Requiem (though the very operatic Sherill Milnes seems an odd choice for baritone soloist); and the collection of rhapsodies by Liszt, Dvořák, Enescu, Glazunov and Alfvén.

This set is not just a superb collection of performances by a winning orchestra-and-conductor partnership, but it is also a dazzling tribute to Decca's engineering – few companies have achieved such a



consistent and glorious sound over so many years. The label 'Decca Sound' really does mean something.

James Jolly

THE RECORDING

Decca Sound: Dutoit Montréal

Montreal SO / Charles Dutoit
Decca © (35 discs) 478 9466

Opera



Richard Fairman reviews a new Turn of the Screw from Warsaw:

'It is an impressive offering, imaginatively cast and recorded with a well-judged balance in a warm acoustic' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 114**



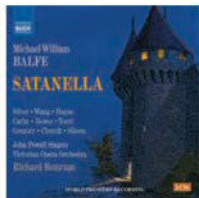
Hugo Shirley listens to Opera Rara's latest Donizetti release:

'The first two acts are dispatched with all the style and élan we've come to expect from Mark Elder in this music' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 114**

Balfe

Satanella

Kang Wang *ten* Count Rupert
Quentin Hayes *bar* Hortensius
Anthony Gregory *bar* Karl
Trevor Bowes *bass* Arimanes
Frank Church *bar* Braccaccio
Sally Silver *sop* Satanella
Christine Tocci *mez* Stella
Catherine Carby *sop* Lelia
Elizabeth Sikora *mez* First Lady
John Powell Singers; Victorian Opera Orchestra / Richard Bonyng
 Naxos © 2 8 660378/9 (112' • DDD • S)



Operatic weddings tend to be eventful. Still, pity Count

Rupert, hero of Balfe's

1858 opera *Satanella*. Not only is his bride struck by lightning on the way to the altar, she's subsequently revealed to be the titular she-demon in disguise – the actual future Countess having been abducted by pirates shortly before the ceremony. And we're only in Act 2 of this four-act supernatural spectacular. It's easy to laugh – and if this premiere recording does nothing else, it demonstrates just how brilliantly Gilbert & Sullivan skewered this sort of melodramatic mid-Victorian extravaganza. Despite the best efforts of his champions, Balfe has gone from being famous for one opera to being famous for one aria, but the qualities that once made *The Bohemian Girl* so popular are there by the bucketload in *Satanella*: colourful orchestration, sensational drama and yard after yard of lilting, ballad-like melodies.

The plot is a cheerfully clichéd cocktail of devilment and pious sentimentality. Summoned from Hell by Count Rupert to help restore his fortune, Satanella falls head-over-heels for her prey and, moved by his love for his sweetheart and foster-sister (yes, it's that kind of libretto) Lelia, achieves redemption and ascends to Heaven to the sound of organ, harp and angelic choir. If there's no 'I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls',

Satanella herself is a little gem of a role for coloratura soprano. Her aria 'There's a power whose sway' contains just enough Bellini to lodge in the ear: Balfe certainly gets plenty of mileage from it.

This recording was clearly a labour of love for the Cheshire-based Victorian Opera Northwest, and it has one unbeatable ace to play – the conducting of Richard Bonyng. Bonyng is unsurpassed in this repertoire; he keeps it zipping buoyantly along, effortlessly supporting his singers and clearly relishing every baleful horn call, rippling harp and languishing cello solo.

His cast, too, feels near-ideal. The young Chinese-born tenor Kang Wang is a Rupert of considerable dash, and Sally Silver sings the title-role – the only really developed female character – with sweetness and sparkle. Catherine Carby makes a warmly expressive Lelia and Trevor Bowes is suitably black-toned and sonorous as the demon-king Arimanes. The chorus is adequate, though at times you wish someone had reminded them, Barbirolli-like, that they're not bank clerks on a Sunday outing but souls sizzling in hell. Wind and thunder effects whip up a suitably Gothic atmosphere.

The spoken dialogue is wisely omitted and there are a few cuts – the original production apparently lasted over four hours but this fits neatly on two CDs. It's a shame that space couldn't be found to print the sung text, creaky though it is (there's a full libretto on Google Books), and the synopsis provided is sketchy and at times misleading (it has Rupert marrying his 'half sister' – Balfe's librettists may have been relaxed about the occult but they drew the line at incest). Other than that, it's hard to imagine *Satanella* being more lovingly and persuasively revived. Sup with a long spoon – but enjoy. **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

Fidelio

Eva Marton *sop* Leonore
James King *ten* Florestan
Aage Haugland *bass* Rocco

Theo Adam *bass-bar* Don Pizarro
Lilian Watson *sop* Marzelline
Thomas Moser *ten* Jaquino
Tom Krause *bass-bar* Don Fernando
Horst Hiestermann *ten* First Prisoner
Kurt Rydl *bass* Second Prisoner

Chorus of the Vienna State Opera;

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Lorin Maazel

Orfeo ® 2 C908 1521 (138' • AAD • S)

Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, August 5, 1983



The booklet essay for Orfeo's latest Salzburg Festival excavation is

entitled 'Fidelio – an opera for conductors'. This historic broadcast (OK but not sounding as of too recent vintage) provides a classic example of the complex art of the late Lorin Maazel, in the middle of his brief directorship of the Vienna State Opera.

The musical performance is – of course – strictly organised, well played and unfailingly together on a nuts and bolts level. (Although I suspect it may not be exactly tight to the stage in terms of Leopold Lindtberg's production, as 'Maestro' Maazel tends to begin musical cues – entries after pauses included – when he wants to.) There is, however, puzzlingly little apparent relationship between tempi and dynamics and the emotions, or tensions, one might imagine Beethoven, and the stage, were attempting to convey. Generally this is quite a 'fast' performance compared with various versions under Klemperer, Karajan, Colin Davis or Maazel's own far from negligible 1963 Decca studio recording. Yet it's unclear why it should be: as unclear in the context as the sudden slowing-up of the very end of Act 1 and of right before Florestan's 'Euch werde Lohn', or the hurrying-along of Beethoven's carefully graded dynamics of conversation with Rocco in the Act 1 finale. Yes, of course there are indications in the score of much of this but hardly with this 'red demand' degree of urgency. It calls



The Ferrarese Chorus of the Accademia di Santo Spirito and Ensemble Lorenzo da Ponte perform Bertoni's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the city's Teatro Comunale

attention to the podium but not to the unfolding music drama.

The cast perform strongly according to their lights, although what is left of the dialogue, despite the presence of an experienced German-speaking stage director, is no more confident than it often was from singers at this time. James King – in the seventh release of him in this role you may find from the 1970s and '80s – is a dependably moving Florestan, more nobly broken than defiant, still able to effect the role's tricky turns. Eva Marton can be a thrilling Leonore when she opens up, unless the unevenness of the voice moving up through the gears disturbs. Theo Adam delivers a thoroughly professional 'bad guy' Pizarro, Watson a superb, tinglingly fresh Marzelline and Tom Krause (Maazel's Pizarro 20 years earlier) a forceful, definite Fernando. All that works at a high level, even if no especial sparks are struck.

Two factors hold this release back: unfathomable conducting (less clear and effective in interpretation than in 1963) and the availability of a large number of truly 'great' *Fidelios* – Bruno Walter (two), Furtwängler (three), Erich Kleiber, Klemperer (three), Böhm (at least two) and Abbado. **Mike Ashman**

Bertoni

Orfeo ed Euridice

Vivica Genaux *mez* Orfeo
Francesca Lombardi-Mazzulli *sop* Euridice
Jan Petryka *ten* Imeneo
Chorus of the Accademia di Santo Spirito, Ferrara;
Ensemble Lorenzo da Ponte / Roberto Zarpellon
 Fra Bernardo (P) FB1601729 (70' • DDD • T)
 Recorded live at the Teatro Comunale, Ferrara,
 February 15, 2014



Ferdinando Bertoni knew that he was tempting fate composing *Orfeo ed Euridice*, to the Calzabigi libretto famously set by Gluck and using the same castrato, Gaetano Guadagni, in the title-role. Seeking to cover himself in the preface to the score, he acknowledged that he had had Gluck's opera in front of him while at work, adding that 'those of fine, discriminating taste will recognise the difference in the results'.

In the scene between Orfeo and the Furies, and in the setting of 'Che puro ciel!' in the Elysian Fields, it's not so much the differences as the blatant similarities – of

rhythm, texture, even melodic contour – that strike the ear: a case of 'call the lawyers', had copyright protection existed in 1776. The crucial distinction is between talent and genius, between the effective (the Orfeo-Furies scene) or the prettily decorative ('Che puro ciel!') and the sublime. If you know the Gluck, Bertoni's score in Acts 1 and 2, replete with jaunty minuet rhythms, is in danger of sounding like a pale palimpsest.

But approached with an innocent ear – near-impossible, of course, then and now – it is an appealing, well-crafted piece of work by a seasoned operatic professional. And in Act 3, where Gluck's invention is less consistently inspired, Bertoni paradoxically seems more individual, especially in the duet and the impassioned minor-key aria for Euridice. With Orfeo's 'Che farò' it's inevitably an unequal contest, though the emotional level rises sharply after the tripping gavotte opening.

Performances of *Orfeo*, Gluck's or Bertoni's, stand or fall by the mezzo or countertenor taking the title-role. With her intense, darkly flaring tone and dramatic involvement, the Alaskan mezzo Vivica Genaux is consistently compelling,

whether in elegy, entreaty or her anguished Act 3 exchanges with Euridice. More than once the power of her middle and (unforced) chest register put me in mind of Marilyn Horne. Francesca Lombardi-Mazzulli is, rightly, no shrinking violet as Euridice. Vivid with her words, she uses the bright edge on her tone in a notably fiery account of her aria. Jan Petryka, with just a few snatches of recitative and a brief aria – another cheerful minuet – sings agreeably as Hymen (here usurping Gluck's Cupid). Despite the odd moment of roughness, Roberto Zarpellon draws lively and elegantly shaped playing from the Ferrara period band. And while this is a live performance, you wouldn't guess it until applause erupts at the end. The libretto is printed in Italian only. But this irritant hardly inhibits a recommendation to explorers of the 18th-century operatic hinterland, for the work itself and for the superb performance of Vivica Genaux.

Richard Wigmore

Britten

The Turn of the Screw

Eric Barry *ten*..... Peter Quint
Diana Montague *mez*..... Mrs Grose
Emily Workman *sop*..... Governess
Kathleen Reville *sop*..... Miss Jessel
Dominic Lynch *treb*..... Miles
Rosie Lomas *sop*..... Flora

ensemble / Łukasz Borowicz

Dux Ⓢ ② DUX1247/8 (105' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at the Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall during the 19th Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival, March 28, 2015



Each of the 13 instrumentalists in this performance is listed separately in the

booklet with a full-page photo and accompanying biography. As these players do not seem to exist as a group, individual names are a necessity, but surely this is how it should always be. Britten wrote for a chamber orchestra of virtuoso soloists and the Polish musicians do not disappoint. Their high-quality playing, with keen ensemble under conductor Łukasz Borowicz, is one of the strengths of this live recording.

The occasion was *The Turn of the Screw*'s belated Polish premiere in March last year. In many respects it is an impressive offering, imaginatively cast and recorded with a well-judged balance in a warm acoustic – but, as so often with concert performances, the

atmosphere is a bit lacking. At the head of the cast Emily Workman makes a successful Governess. Her voice has the shining surface of Britten's Jennifer Vyvyan, but with extra depth to the sound, and she puts across as many words as other sopranos in the comfort of a recording studio. Diana Montague partners her sympathetically as Mrs Grose. Dominic Lynch's mild-mannered Miles and Rosie Lomas's Flora are recorded fairly close, a sensible decision. Although he lacks malign and seductive colours, Eric Barry makes a virtue of his bright, clear singing as Quint. Kathleen Reville, with her baleful, dark mezzo, is a near-ideal Miss Jessel. At speeds a touch faster than average, Borowicz keeps the opera pressing forwards (the Governess clearly takes the express train to Bly), though the resonant ambience of the Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall takes the edge off Britten's brilliant instrumental writing.

This new arrival is preferable to its most recent competitor, the live concert performance on LSO Live. For those who are not worried by phantom coughs from the audience, the Glyndebourne set under Edward Gardner boasts an intensity that can only be found on the stage. Among studio recordings, Daniel Harding on Virgin Classics leads a true chamber performance, every detail of Joan Rodgers's haunted Governess and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra's cultured playing deftly imagined. Finally, Britten's own recording, in mono only and sounding rather aged these days, is chillingly atmospheric. With its spheres of action skilfully delineated by the recording engineers, Decca's 1950s recording is just what one would expect from the golden age of radio.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparisons:

Britten (8/55*, 5/90) (LOND) 425 672-2LH2

Harding (10/02*) (VIRG) 456379-2

Gardner (8/11) (GLYN) GFO011-07

Farnes (3/14) (LSO) LSO0749

Donizetti

Le Duc d'Albe

Angela Meade *sop*..... Hélène d'Egmont
Michael Spyres *ten*..... Henri de Bruges
Laurent Naouri *bass-bar*..... Le Duc d'Albe
Gianluca Buratto *bass*..... Daniel Brauer
David Stout *bar*..... Sandoval
Trystan Liŷr Griffiths *ten*..... Carlos
Robin Tritschler *ten*..... Balbuena
Dawid Kimberg *bar*..... Un Tavernier

Opera Rara Chorus, Hallé Orchestra /

Sir Mark Elder

Opera Rara Ⓢ ② ORC54 (93' • DDD • S/T/t)



Seasoned Donizettians will probably need a word of clarification when it comes this

latest Opera Rara release; the less fully initiated might want a word of warning. Donizetti's *Le Duc d'Albe*, though begun as early as 1839, was victim of delays in the fraught and highly politicised world of Parisian opera and languished unfinished at the composer's death in 1848. The material he did leave was much later reconstituted as *Il Duca d'Albe*, with gaps filled in and two acts more or less composed afresh by the one-time Donizetti student Matteo Salvi (among others). An irony, as Roger Parker points out in his exemplary booklet essay, is that the one aria that is widely known from the work, 'Angelo casto e bel', was in fact composed by Salvi to fill one of the major gaps left by Donizetti.

Opera Rara has decided here only to record what is largely Donizetti's own music, which means just the first two acts – but you'll have to go as far as the third page of the booklet to find this significant piece of information. The final two acts were too fragmentary, Parker explains, to have been presented without major filling-in work from elsewhere; the first two acts are 95 per cent complete. Martin Fitzpatrick, a member of English National Opera's music staff, has joined the dots to present a performable version of them, a brief but very convincing prelude at the start being the most substantial contribution.

So what we have is but a torso, tantalising and inevitably positing several major what-ifs. And it's all the more tantalising since the first two acts are dispatched with all the style and élan we've come to expect from Mark Elder in this music, here with the Hallé. He brings conviction, stylistic nous and a wonderful airy clarity to the score, and his Manchester orchestra play very well, though without being quite so revelatory, for me, as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment were in the admittedly more rewarding task of *Les martyrs* (6/15).

Michael Spyres returns as the hero, in this case Henri, the Flemish rabble-rouser who is treated with suspicious magnanimity by the Duke himself: in the fourth act he was to have found out, Luke Skywalker-like, that his nemesis was in fact his father. Angela Meade is impressive as his beloved Hélène, the defiant daughter of the same count Egmont immortalised in Goethe's play (and Beethoven's overture), who gets a thrilling aria in Act 1. Both these singers turn in persuasive, tirelessly sung



Restoring Donizetti's *Le Duc d'Albe*: (l-r) David Stout, Michael Spyres and Laurent Naouri recording Opera Rara's latest release

performances, even if neither has a voice to convey the sort of dramatic intensity and individuality that would be able to give this music an extra boost. The only francophone in the cast, Laurent Naouri is imposing, but also lacks vocal focus as the Duke, while Gianluca Buratto is a touch woolly as the brewer Daniel – we're in Brussels, so beer plays an unusually prominent part. There are fine contributions from the rest of the cast.

The score is of course of great interest, with many fine moments: that big aria for Hélène and the duet between the Duke and his son in Act 1; the furtive conspirators' ensemble starting at Daniel's 'Plus bas... Plus bas' (disc 2, tr 8); a lovely extended duet between Henri and Hélène (crowned with an exciting if slightly pressed top E flat from both singers); and a rousing final hymn to freedom in Act 2. But with just these two acts we have little chance to develop any sympathy for the characters, not least regarding the dilemma facing the Duke himself; or, of course, to hear how Donizetti, with the necessary exposition behind him, would have risen to the challenges posed by the rest of the libretto.

Opera Rara certainly can't be blamed for all that, though; instead the label should be thanked for yet another fascinating and important release, presented with all its usual care, seriousness and lavish attention to detail – even if the appeal of the set might be a little more specialist than some.

Hugo Shirley

Honegger/Ibert

L'Aiglon

Anne-Catherine Gillet *sop* *L'Aiglon*
Marc Barrard *bar* Flambeau
Etienne Dupuis *bar* Metternich
Philippe Sly *bar* Marmont
Pascal Charbonneau *ten* Military Attaché
Isaiah Bell *ten* Gentz
Tyler Duncan *bar* Prokesch
Jean-Michel Richer *ten* Sedlinsky
Hélène Guilmette *sop* Thérèse
Marie-Nicole Lemieux *contr* Marie-Louise
Julie Boulianne *mez* Fanny Elssler
Kimy McLaren *sop* Comtesse Camerata
Montreal Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Kent Nagano

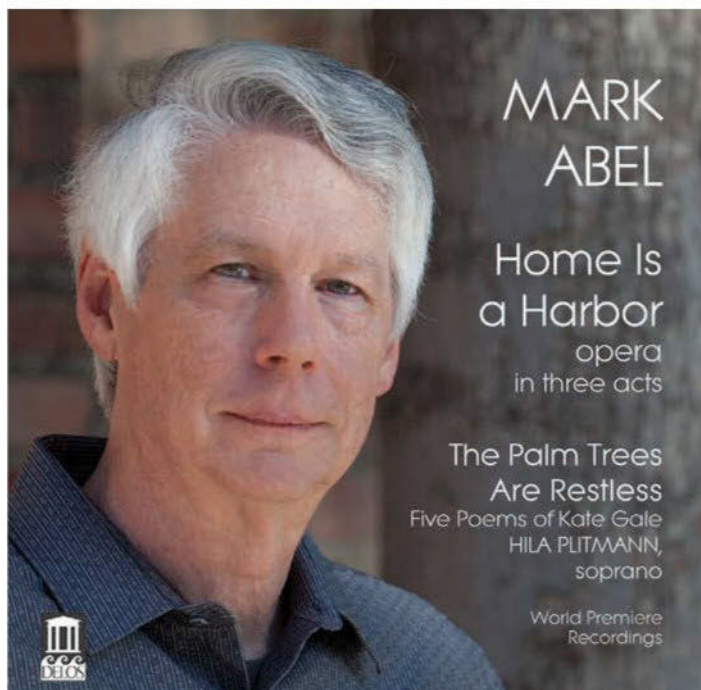
Recorded live at the Maison Symphonique, Montreal, March 2015
 Decca ® ② 478 9502DHO2 (92' • DDD • S/T/t)



Co-written by Arthur Honegger and Jacques Ibert, *L'Aiglon* was first performed in Monte

Carlo in March 1937. An adaptation of Edmond Rostand's play of the same name, it deals with the elusive historical figure of Napoléon II – known in his lifetime as the Duke of Reichstadt and posthumously as 'the Little Eagle' – who, following his father's abdication, was taken into the custody of his mother, Marie-Louise of Austria, and kept a virtual prisoner at the Habsburg court. He died, aged only 21, in 1832, but while he lived, all Europe waited, in anticipation and terror, to see if he would attempt to claim his imperial title.

Rostand's play was written in 1900 as a travesti vehicle for Sarah Bernhardt, following her success in *Hamlet* the previous year, and self-consciously echoes Shakespeare in its examination of the relationship between volition and action. The Duke – drawn to Napoleonic idealism but trapped by Metternich's sinister



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'A work of some stature': Felix Weingartner's *Die Dorfschule* features as one of a pair of operas based on the same play, issued by CPO

Realpolitik – dreams hopelessly of the France he will neither see again nor rule, though his forceful imagination gradually colours the lives of all those round him. In the climactic scene, he narrates the history of the battle of Wagram with such intensity that the old soldier Flambeau, fatally injured in a futile attempt to help the Duke escape, believes he is dying a hero's death on the battlefield.

At the time of the opera's premiere, the two composers kept teasingly quiet about who had written what. We now know, however, that Ibert composed Acts 1 and 5 and the Act 3 ballet, while Honegger undertook the rest. The pervasive mood is one of bittersweet nostalgia. Vocal writing and characterisation are remarkably consistent, but we can detect subtle differences elsewhere. Ibert's contribution is characteristically refined and svelte. Honegger's dissonances have greater bite, and his brass-writing is more elaborate and prominent. The booklet-notes make much of the opera as an expression of French nationalism in the face of the rise of Nazism, and it was indeed dropped from the repertoire during the Occupation, when Ibert's music was proscribed. But the work is neither simplistic nor propagandist. Austrian culture was comparably under

threat in 1937 and Ibert's glorious waltzes evoke 19th-century Vienna even as they mourn its passing.

Of late there has been something of a revival of interest in the piece, with important stagings in Marseilles and Lausanne in 2004 and 2013 respectively. Decca's recording was made in Montreal, during the series of concert performances that marked its Canadian premiere in March last year. Conducted with care and palpable affection by Kent Nagano, it boasts a fine, mostly francophone ensemble cast, with not a weak link anywhere. At its centre, in a trouser role that is a gift for a lyric soprano, is Anne-Catherine Gillet's Duke, bright in tone and wonderfully subtle in her response to the complexities of both text and character. Marc Barrard is the touchingly funny Flambeau, while Etienne Dupuis makes Metternich all the more sinister by singing his music so beautifully. The orchestral sound is gorgeous, as is the recording itself, and only the occasional distant cough reminds us that it was made live. **Tim Ashley**

Orff

Gisei – Das Opfer

Kathryn Lewek *sop*..... Kwan Shusai
Ryan McKinny *bass-bar*..... Genzo

Ulrike Helzel *mez*..... Tonami
Markus Brück *bar*..... Matsuo
Elena Zhidkova *mez*..... Chiyo
Jana Kurucová *sop*..... Kotaro
Burkhard Ulrich *ten*..... Gemba
Chorus and Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin
/ Jacques Lacombe
 CPO © CPO777 819-2 (60' • DDD • S/T/t)

Weingartner

Die Dorfschule

Simon Pauly *bar*..... Gemba
Clemens Bieber *ten*..... Matsuo
Fionnuala McCarthy *sop*..... Schio
Jana Kurucová *sop*..... Kotaro
Kathryn Lewek *sop*..... Kwan Shusai
Stephen Bronk *bar*..... Genzo
Elena Zhidkova *mez*..... Tonami
Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin / Jacques Lacombe
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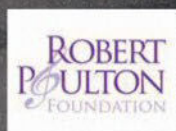
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performances at Berlin's Deutsche Oper in 2012, and share a common source in the play *Terakoya* ('The Village School') by the 18th-century Japanese dramatist Takeda Izumo, first translated into German in 1900. *Gisei – Das Opfer*, completed in 1913, when Orff was only 18, didn't reach the stage until 2010, when it was given at the Darmstadt Staatstheater, where Orff had briefly been chief conductor in 1918, and where Weingartner, ironically, was also music director from 1914 to 1916. *Die Dorfschule* was first heard in Vienna in 1920. There is no evidence that Weingartner was familiar with Orff's opera, as has sometimes been suggested.

Terakoya is a horrific tale of honour and child-murder, set during the 10th-century feud between the legendary chancellor Michizane and his enemy Tokhira. The exiled Michizane's son, Kwan Shusai, has been secretly brought up by the chancellor's loyal samurai Genzo, now a schoolteacher, and his wife Tonami. The deception is discovered, however, and Tokhira's henchman Matsuo demands that Genzo must kill Kwan Shusai and hand over his severed head. Genzo, bent on ensuring Kwan Shusai's safety at any cost, murders a recently enrolled pupil, Kotaro, in the boy's place. Only gradually do we realise that Kotaro is Matsuo's own son, whom he and his wife Chiyo (Schio in Weingartner) have enrolled in Genzo's school in full knowledge that the teacher's unswerving loyalty to his former master will cost the boy his life. Their reasons for doing so are different in each opera.

Both composers wrote their own librettos and the divergences are substantial. The teenage Orff was obsessed with Debussy and – via *Pelléas* – with Maeterlinck, whose influence looms large over his text. The halting, murky language renders psychology and motivation obscure, though it becomes clear that Matsuo has decided to atone for his previous betrayal of Michizane and Genzo with the sacrifice of his own son. Weingartner is more straightforward. The back-narrative is simplified to get rid of references to characters – Michizane, Tokhira and so on – who never appear. Where Orff, horribly, shows no concern for the children whatsoever, Weingartner brings them centre stage: his Kotaro, like Iphigenia, has decided upon self-sacrifice for the common good; Kwan Shusai, unaware of Matsuo's designs, expresses horror and outrage at the other boy's death. Matsuo, far from being a guilt-ridden traitor, is a kind of resistance leader, working undercover at the centre of a despicable new regime.

The scores are comparably different. That Orff, at 18, should be able to approximate Debussy's sound world with such finesse is in itself remarkable but the Impressionistic style, all muted half-tones and hushed orchestral and vocal effects, is fatally at odds with the subject, and there's none of the sense of underlying psychological violence that makes *Pelléas* so disturbing. Only Chiyo, complicit in her husband's designs only to be destroyed by them, emerges as a fully rounded character who elicits any sympathy. The others are ciphers, and the overall effect is bland.

Die Dorfschule, on the other hand, is a work of some stature. There are Wagnerisms in the brass-writing and, more surprisingly, in the music for Genzo's pupils, which has curious echoes of the Flower Maidens in *Parsifal*. Though Weingartner disliked Strauss, the way he releases the steady accumulation of tension in a big, lyrical final scene is reminiscent of *Salome* and *Elektra*. As in *Gisei*, it is Schio who holds the balance of sympathies, but elsewhere Weingartner charts the often thin dividing line between idealism and fanaticism with considerable perception.

The recordings are handsomely conducted by Canadian Jacques Lacombe, who has a fine understanding both of *Gisei*'s Francophile sensibilities and the dissonant, post-Romantic angst of *Die Dorfschule*. In *Gisei* the vocal honours go to Ryan McKinny's implacable Genzo and Elena Zhidkova's superbly anguished Chiyo. That Markus Brück's Matsuo and Ulrike Helzel's Tonami register less successfully is Orff's responsibility, not theirs. *Die Dorfschule* needs big voices, and Heldentenor Clemens Bieber and Heldenbariton Stephen Bronk square off effectively as Matsuo and Genzo. Zhidkova, as Tonami this time, and Fionnuala McCarthy – harrowing as Schio, a role that lies implacably high – are both outstanding. *Gisei* is impossible to like and is perhaps for Orff completists only. *Die Dorfschule*, on the other hand, proves remarkably compelling and is well worth hearing. **Tim Ashley**

Ravel

L'heure espagnole

Isabelle Druet *mez*.....Concepción
Frédéric Antoun *ten*.....Gonzalve
Luca Lombardo *ten*.....Torquemada
Marc Barrard *bar*.....Ramiro
Nicolas Courjal *bass*.....Don Íñigo Gómez

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée

François Le Roux *bar*

Lyon National Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin

Naxos © 8 660337 (56' • DDD)



This is a companion to the CD of *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (12/15), recorded during the

same week in January 2013. The orchestra and conductor are common to both, as are the singers of Ramiro and Don Íñigo.

Set in the shop of a clockmaker in 18th-century Toledo, the story is centred on Concepción, who makes use of her husband's weekly absence to service the municipal clocks ('the Spanish hour') to indulge in a little servicing on her own behalf. She turns the initially unwelcome presence of the muscular Ramiro to good account by substituting him for the unsatisfactory Gonzalve and Don Íñigo.

The situation offered Ravel irresistible opportunities for Spanish colour and horological precision, not to mention parody. He instructs the singers to take the recitatives of *opera buffa* as a model. The vocal writing is certainly syllabic but the debt is as much to Debussy as to Italian opera; it's interesting to note that the part of Ramiro was written for the same kind of voice (the so-called *baryton-Martin*) as Pelléas, and both roles were created by the same singer, Jean Périer.

Leonard Slatkin conducts with admirable delicacy, with a nice attention to detail. For instance, the trombone glissandos associated with the would-be lovers leaving their hiding place come across loud and clear, as do the triads when Ramiro tells Torquemada how his watch had saved the life of his uncle in the bullring. Isabelle Druet expresses Concepción's frustration and impatience so vividly that you almost forget that you can't see her. Her outburst 'Oh! La pitoyable aventure!', seconds before her invitation to Ramiro, is powerfully done; and her earlier remark about her husband's virility is heavy with scorn. The ever-helpful Ramiro, more brawn than brain, is touchingly sung by Marc Barrard. The entire cast is excellent, in fact, but Frédéric Antoun's absurd, self-regarding poet deserves a special mention.

Sad to say, *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* finds François Le Roux in disappointingly effortful voice. Buy this for the opera; but in honour of the late lamented Denise Duval, and if you have a taste for the very French, saxophony horns of yesteryear, get hold of the André Cluytens recording too.

Richard Lawrence

L'heure espagnole – selected comparison:

Cluytens (11/53^R, 9/95) (EMI) 565269-2

REPLAY

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Celebrating Monique de la Bruchollerie

A cornucopia of gems, from spheres both public and private, live and studio-based, from a great French pianist

On December 18, 1966, just a few hours after performing Debussy's *La cathédrale engloutie* in recital, **Monique de la Bruchollerie** (1915-72), one of the great French pianists of the 20th century, was involved in a car accident that left her with a fractured skull, lateral paralysis and an irreversible injury to her right hand. Thereafter, teaching was her principal professional activity. A priceless nine-CD 'Monique de la Bruchollerie 100th Anniversary Edition' on Melo Classic includes that very performance of *La cathédrale* (as the last in a series of four Debussy pieces), a reading rich in veiled colours, the final bars – as the cathedral fades from view – played with a degree of sensitivity that would be difficult to match, let alone surpass.

There's a bonus, too: one of two recordings included of Tchaikovsky's First Concerto is a DVD of a 1963 studio performance given with the RTF Philharmonic Orchestra under a very suave-looking André Vandernoot. Bruchollerie herself is facially expressive, intense, boldly virtuosic, with long, slender fingers displaying some stunning fast passagework. A radio studio recording from 1946 (with the Württemberg State Orchestra under Josef Dünnwald), one of two concertos that fill disc 2, is even more exciting, with lightning chords and octaves that Horowitz or even Rachmaninov might have been proud of. The latter would, I'm sure, have admired Bruchollerie's 1951 Boston Symphony Orchestra performance of his Third Concerto under Ernest Ansermet, a supercharged display, very swift and at times meltingly delicate – though be warned, there's a whopping great cut in the first movement. Had someone played me

the concerto's ending 'blind', there is no way I would have credited the whipped-up orchestral excitement to the usually fairly sober Ansermet. Chopin's Second Concerto under the Romanian Jonel Perlea is equally rich in interpretative incident, the finale pure delight; while a 1966 live Bucharest performance of Saint-Saëns's *Egyptian* Concerto (under Iosif Conta) is more gripping than the version put out by Doremi, on one of two Bruchollerie double packs that it released a few years ago.

There is some duplication with Doremi here, but not much. It's also worth noting that the often exquisitely detailed 1965 account of Schumann's *Carnaval* is not the same as the version included on a previous Bruchollerie CD from Melo Classic, which dates from 1959.

She was happier – certainly more spontaneous – in a concert or recital situation

A Chopin solo sequence is crowned by a structurally conceived account of the Third Piano Sonata, though what's billed as the *Fantaisie* in F minor, Op 49, turns out to be the *Polonaise-fantaisie*, Op 61. Beethoven is represented, first by Bruchollerie's first recording (1943), a previously unissued studio set (for HMV) of the Fourth Concerto, nimble and strongly played, and sporting Saint-Saëns's flamboyant cadenzas. There are also versions of sonatas Nos 8, 30 and 31, the extremely dramatic No 8 (*Pathétique*), being a highlight.

Bruchollerie made various LP recordings (her massive Brahms B flat Concerto for Vox can be heard online at: sounds.bl.uk/classical-music),

but comparing the studio Beethoven Fourth with a live *Emperor* (1948, Berlin Philharmonic under Leopold Ludwig) inclines me to the view that she was happier – certainly more spontaneous – in a concert or recital situation than she was in the studio.

As to the rest, Bach's D minor Concerto, BWV1052 (1948), is dutifully played and rather distantly recorded. We're given Franck's *Variations symphoniques* and two Mozart concertos (K466 and K488 – again, not the LP versions out on Doremi) – K466 (1956, with Jean Fournet conducting) reminding me very much of Schnabel's Mozart in the way that Bruchollerie excitedly accelerates her phrases.

As for 20th-century music, there's minor Szymanowski, Bartók, Shostakovich, Villa-Lobos and an extraordinary private recording of Henri Dutilleul's Sonata, a work completed in 1948 and set down by Bruchollerie when the piece was barely two years old. Her playing fairly leaps out at you (a later performance was issued by INA Mémoire Vive). Quite a number of the recordings gathered here are taken from the Bruchollerie family archive and are sonically less consistent than either the standard radio or commercially released records included, but still good enough to appreciate an artist of genuine stature. There are good notes by daughter Diane de la Bruchollerie. I'd call this a major historic release.

THE RECORDING



Monique de La Bruchollerie
100th Anniversary Edition
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A delightful supplement to Alicia de Larrocha's Decca catalogue comes courtesy of South West German radio

A gentle classicist

Another master pianist to celebrate is **Alicia de Larrocha**, whose Decca survey of Mozart solo piano works was reissued on three Eloquence CDs in 2014. In a touching note appended to that set, Jeremy Nicholas mentions Larrocha's small stature (4ft 9in) and small concerto repertoire, though the performances coupled here, on this musically compelling and well-engineered stereo CD from SWR Music, attest to an elegance, warmth and emotional generosity that transcend these or any other passing considerations. Larrocha's grace and clarity of musical thinking make Mozart's great, yet songful, E flat Concerto, K482, sound as natural as breathing. There's poetry to spare in the wonderful *Andante*, a reading that relates a sense of infinite sadness, whether in the dramatic interpolations at 6'54" (where the pianist seems to plead in response to defiant gestures from the orchestra, here with immaculately dispatched trills) or the baleful passage with bassoon at 9'05". Larrocha is a most eloquent commentator, especially as the music ultimately seeks relief by shifting into the major. García Navarro and the Stuttgart RSO provide sympathetic support, whereas it falls to the SWR SO of Baden-Baden and Freiburg under Ernest Bour to provide a subtly darkened orchestral context for Beethoven's Concerto No 3. Larrocha offers an immaculately turned, fairly intimate reading, profoundly musical at every juncture. Best are the central *Largo*, which sings sublimely, and the finale, played with an elegance that borders on sounding Mozartian. The stereo sound is excellent.

THE RECORDING



Alicia de Larrocha
Beethoven. Mozart piano
concertos
SWR Music © SWR19006CD

Ivry Gitlis on the radio

Even at the age of 93 the charismatic Israeli violinist **Ivry Gitlis** still gives the odd recital. Although his occasional abrasiveness and relative leanness of tone aren't to everyone's taste, his keen imagination, sense of colour, interpretative daring and invariable intensity are bound to hold you captive. This set from SWR Music using SWR mastertapes features some cracking performances. Top dollar is awarded to a striking account of Hindemith's Violin Concerto under the great Hans Rosbaud, the slow movement as sweetly eloquent as the outer movements are fiercely energetic. In a booklet interview, Gitlis himself recalls how dissatisfied he was with his Vox recording of the concerto (with conductor Hubert Reichert), and there is little doubt that the version presented here is substantially superior. Rosbaud is also at the helm for the 12-minute work written for Gitlis by Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, rather like the violin concerto that Varèse didn't write. In the case of Bartók's Second Concerto, Gitlis's Vox recording with Jascha Horenstein and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra is generally superior to this, SWR's successor under Wolfgang Rennert, and certainly swifter (34'50" as opposed to 38'55"). True, Gitlis is often memorably expressive (as in the opening pages of the second movement), but the main problem is

with the Mannheim National Theatre Orchestra, whose playing is rough around the edges. Paganini's Second Violin Concerto under Stanisław Skrowaczewski projects Gitlis as a wiry athlete, whereas the works with piano (Daria Horova) include a playful rendition of Saint-Saëns's *Introduction and Rondo capriccioso* (in Bizet's arrangement) and Wieniawski's D major Polonaise which in just five minutes sums up all that is characterful and attractive in Gitlis's playing. Sonatas by Brahms (No 3) and Debussy, as well as Bloch's *Nigun* suggest a poet of the bow who can both laugh and cry. A real feast for fiddle aficionados.

THE RECORDING



Ivry Gitlis: Original SWR Tapes Remastered, 1962-86
Various composers
SWR Music © ② SWR19005CD

Gendron plays Brahms and Prokofiev

A little while ago Doremi released a 1970 performance of Brahms's Double Concerto with Gitlis and cellist **Maurice Gendron** under the baton of Michel Tabachnik – an interesting if not entirely convincing encounter between two great string players. Compare that with a 1956 Double where Gendron teams up with Arthur Grumiaux and you're in a different world: two performers playing truly as one, their tones ideally matched, both subscribing to an expressive policy of 'less is more'. The slow movement in particular is remarkably beautiful, and Hans Müller-Kray proves himself a sympathetic conductor. As 'vintage' recordings of this great work go, this has to be one of the finest. The main coupling on Melo Classic's well-transferred Gendron CD is Prokofiev's Cello Concerto with Otto Matzerath conducting (also 1956). Gendron's approach, in its combination of warmth and refinement, is not unlike János Starker's, either of the concerto as originally written (EMI) or the *Sinfonia concertante* rewrite (SWR Music). Fauré's *Elégie* (under Sixten Ehrling) makes for a mellow and musically satisfying bonus.

THE RECORDING



Maurice Gendron
Brahms, Prokofiev, Fauré
Melo Classic © MC3011

Books



David Gutman reads Julian Barnes's new Shostakovich novel:

'Barnes finds jumping-off points for reflection in crises in which the composer was confronted directly by the State'



Richard Osborne on a study of Brahms's conducting successors:

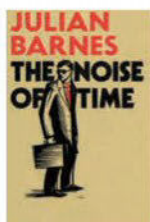
'Steinbach's Brahms has long been music's equivalent of Lord Palmerston's Schleswig-Holstein Question'

The Noise of Time

By Julian Barnes

Jonathan Cape, HB, 192pp, £14.99

ISBN 978-1-91070-260-4



Julian Barnes has never fought shy of tackling music. His virtuoso short-story collection

The Lemon Tree (2004) includes a deliciously funny skewering of the concert-hall experience and ends with a bleaker take on the dotage of Sibelius, also alluded to in this latest project, a fragmented interior monologue that calls itself a novel.

Rather than rehashing Shostakovich's life story as chronological narrative, Barnes finds jumping-off points for reflection in three real-life crises in which the composer was confronted directly by the power of the State. The first takes us to the Great Terror, with Shostakovich on the landing of his apartment block anticipating a visit from the secret police. *Lady Macbeth of Mtensk* has displeased the Leader and Teacher, and his most powerful patron has been targeted as an enemy of the people.

Twelve years later, amid renewed cultural clampdown, Shostakovich is blackmailed into attending a Soviet-sponsored Peace Conference in New York. There he faces a new form of intellectual humiliation (CIA-funded as it happens). The third pivot occurs in 1960 when he is persuaded to join the Party: 'How easy it was to be a Communist when you weren't living under Communism!'

Throughout, the tone is intimate and aphoristic, the paragraphs succinct – more Seventh String Quartet than Seventh Symphony. Not that you'd expect Barnes of all writers to embark on some blockbusting explication of Soviet reality. However opaque the protagonist's inner life, there are jokes: 'Integrity is like

virginity: once lost, never recoverable.'

A certain repetitiousness might be intended to mirror the obsessive technique of pieces like the First Cello Concerto or just reflect the way in which any music functions through reprise and variation.

In acknowledging his prime sources as Elizabeth Wilson's *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994) and *Testimony: The Memoirs of Shostakovich, as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov* (1979), Barnes admits that musicologists will recognise them. A good many readers of this magazine will have a similar sense of déjà vu. Those unruffled by known unknowns freshly imagined may yet be perturbed by Barnes's willingness to breathe literary life into identifiable anecdotes of the dodgier sort. A *Testimony*-derived incident in which Stravinsky proffers his stick to Soviet functionaries is one such easily debunked fantasy. And Barnes misses a trick when it comes to the campaign against Andrei Sakharov. While Shostakovich's name did indeed appear among the signatories of a condemnatory letter, his third wife insists that he never actually signed, having spent a day successfully dodging *Pravda* representatives. Only it made no difference. Perhaps that episode belongs in a different type of novel.

Barnes does sometimes give alternative readings of disputed vignettes. More central to his theme is the way he makes Shostakovich face up to the inadequacy of his moral defences: 'There could be a smugness to irony... You woke up one morning and no longer knew if your tongue was in your cheek; and even if it was, whether that mattered any more, whether anyone noticed.' But what if it really isn't the compromises that matter but the quality of the music as music? Barnes also allows Shostakovich to see his own death as an essential step in a process of renewal that will drown out the noise around him. Italicised framing paragraphs find a kind of hope in the chance alignment of a perfect triad.

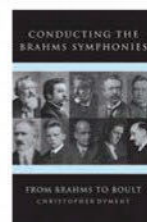
David Gutman

Conducting the Brahms Symphonies: from Brahms to Boult

By Christopher Dymont

Boydell Press, HB, 250pp, £25

ISBN 978-1-78327-100-9



The first thing to be said about this book is that the magisterial sweep of its title is somewhat at odds with the narrowness of its contents. 'Conducting the Brahms Symphonies: The Steinbach Legacy' would give a clearer idea of a volume whose principal value lies in its addressing the career and posthumous reach of the work of Brahms conductor Fritz Steinbach (1855-1916).

Steinbach's Brahms has long been music's equivalent of Lord Palmerston's Schleswig-Holstein Question, one of those historical conundrums no living person entirely understands. Steinbach left no recordings, nor do we have any of his conducting scores or marked parts. Yet the influence of important disciples, actual or alleged, is still thought by some to be the way through which we can best understand what Christopher Dymont is happy to call 'the very spirit of the composer'.

Not that the unravelling of the Steinbach Question is the only thing Dymont is about. In his preface he writes of his 'life-long subscription to the Classical rectitude' of the Brahms-conducting of men such as Toscanini, Weingartner, Boult and Fritz Busch, while feeling 'just a little lonely' in the face of the increasingly vocal claims of supporters of 'such variously arch-Romantic figures as Mengelberg, Furtwängler and Stokowski'.

Of these it is Furtwängler who comes in for the severest condemnation, not for the merits or demerits of his Brahms performances but because of 'traits' in his conducting which are 'as distant as could be imagined from Steinbach's probable handling of the symphonies'. It is the

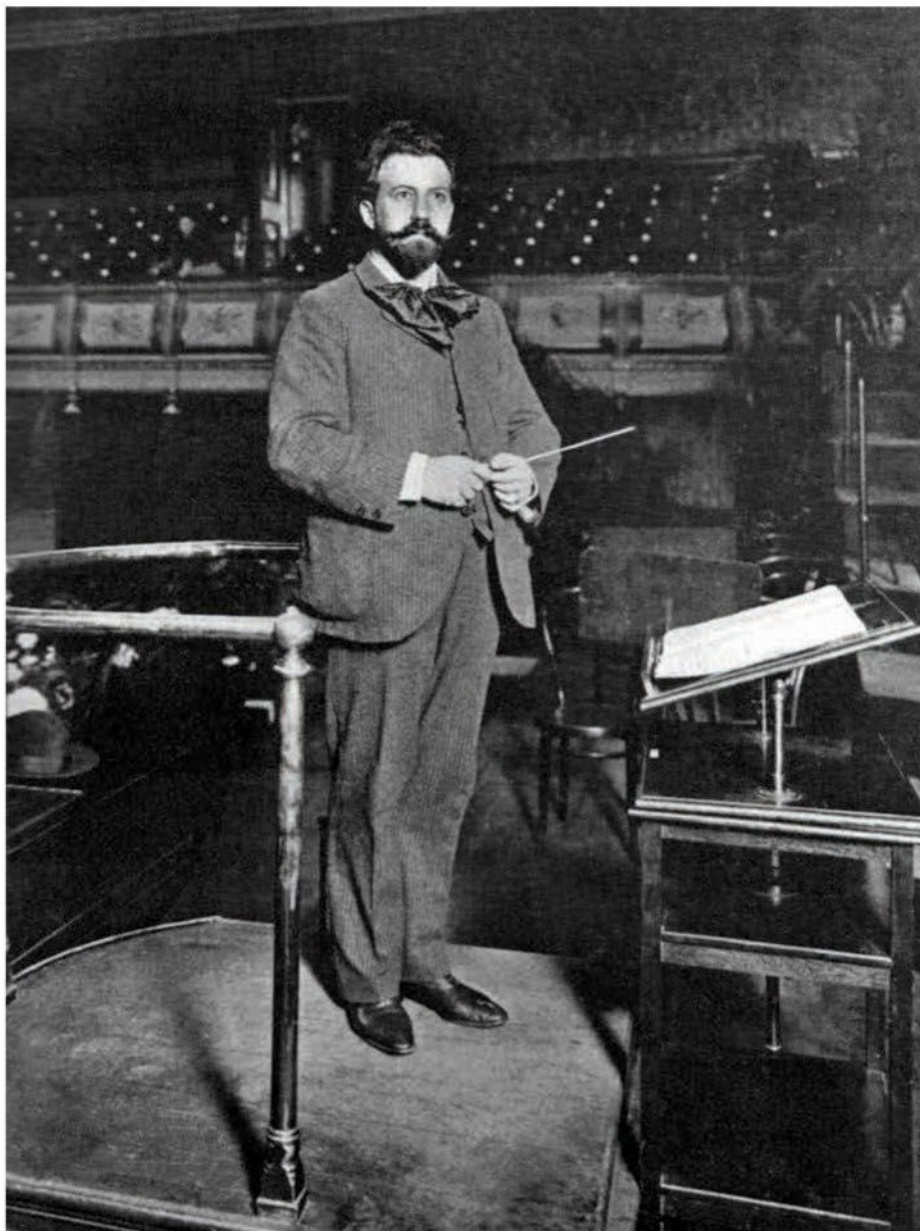
'probable' there that is problematic. For when Dymant writes of Furtwängler's 'inauthentic' freedoms with tempo and structure, he means 'inauthentic' in Steinbachian terms, about which we can only speculate.

What requires no speculation is the music itself (undiscussed in the book) and those elements in Brahms's compositional style which have an important bearing on such matters. Furtwängler's Brahms is curious in as much as his readings of the lucidly through-composed Second and Fourth symphonies, which generally cause conductors relatively few problems, sometimes seemed less successful than his superbly articulated accounts of the structurally fallible First Symphony and the deeply personal Third, with which even great conductors often struggle. (Toscanini, for example, though not, I think, Weingartner or Boult.)

But what of Steinbach? He was in his late twenties when he came to the attention of conductor Hans von Bülow, who had so transformed the fortunes of Meiningen's ancient Court Orchestra that in 1885 it was granted the privilege of introducing Brahms's Fourth Symphony to the world. In 1886 von Bülow handed the orchestra to the 31-year-old Steinbach. With Brahms himself admiring of Steinbach's musicianship, as well as being fond of him personally, the young man quickly became one of the carriers of the flame, though Nikisch and Weingartner also received a laying on of hands.

Weingartner, whose extensive recorded legacy has long been held in high regard by Brahmsians of many persuasions, gets a slightly rough ride from Dymant, who finds him too far beyond the Steinbachian pale to be thought a true follower of 'the way'. As for Nikisch, Dymant records Brahms as being a 'little uncertain' about how to respond to his performances. After a Berlin performance of the Third Symphony Brahms exclaimed, 'I didn't know I had written anything so beautiful'. But is not this what great art and its interpretation is all about? Remember Walt Whitman: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes.'

Von Bülow described Steinbach as 'a sensitive yet strapping' young man and his Brahms readings were probably that too. A 1902 London review describes the symphonies being 'rendered with such life and impulse, with such a spirit of romance, that one felt their power in a quite unaccustomed degree'. Little wonder that apprentice Brahmsians such as Toscanini, Henry Wood (about whose Brahms Dymant tells us more than Wood's official



Apprentice Brahmsian and admirer of Fritz Steinbach: Henry Wood, photographed in 1903

biographer), Boult and Steinbach's pupil Fritz Busch were so smitten.

A musician who attempted to make systematic notes on Steinbach's Brahms was the little-known Kapellmeister Walter Blume (1883-1933). His *Brahms in der Meiningen Tradition*, hastily typed up shortly before his death, is, as Dymant concedes, both fascinating and problematic. Nonetheless, extracts from Blume's notes provide the basis for Dymant's 60-page penultimate chapter where they are used to test out the 'validity' of a select group of meticulously timed and annotated recordings by Abendroth, Boult, Busch, Furtwängler, Stokowski, Walter, Weingartner and Dymant's own personal *victor ludorum*, Arturo Toscanini.

A notable omission here is Otto Klemperer, whose case is judged

'superfluous' by Dymant. This despite the fact that Klemperer studied with Wilhelm Berger, Steinbach's successor in Meiningen in 1903, and in 1917 arrived in Cologne to work with an orchestra whose leadership Steinbach had only recently vacated. 'One always heard the woodwinds,' Boult is quoted as saying of Steinbach's LSO Brahms. This, in the concert hall as I recall, was also true of Klemperer's Brahms, to vivid effect.

At one point Dymant admits, 'We can never know precisely how Brahms conducted his symphonies or wanted them performed'. Therein lies his conundrum. For all that, he has researched and written a book whose boldly assembled mass of documentation and first-hand witness statements it would be folly to ignore.

Richard Osborne

Classics RECONSIDERED



Richard Wigmore and Mike Ashman dissect Fritz Wunderlich's controversial recording of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* from 1965 on DG



Schumann

Dichterliebe, Op 48

Fritz Wunderlich ten Hubert Giesen pf

DG The Originals (M) 449 747-2GÖR

From DG SLPM139 125

I have enjoyed Fritz Wunderlich's singing in many recordings [which] made me look forward greatly to his interpretation of *Dichterliebe* but, alas, expectation was disappointed.

In the first song of *Dichterliebe* the feeling was right and the balance good, so that in the second song I was astonished at the singer's lack of nuance, especially at the

two 'nightingale' cadences, in which neither singer nor pianist observe the *pp* marking. 'Die Rose, die Lilie' is rushed along with little regard to the *ritardando* halfway through, and I found a lack of tenderness in the confession of love in the song following, or real commitment in the next one, in which the pianist is too loud. 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome' is sung with far too little variation of tone, but 'Ich grolle nicht' goes much better and so does 'Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen'; in fact, Wunderlich seems more at home in the quick songs, though 'Hör' ich das Liedchen

klingen' does at last bring a truly sensitive response from both artists. Once again there is no significant change of tone at the last phrase of 'Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen', and not much magic in the postlude to the cycle. The lyrical voice is present but I miss the artistry Wunderlich has so often displayed before. One must therefore turn for performance by a tenor to Ernst Haefliger or Peter Pears. The choice for me is settled by the fact of Britten being at the piano in the Decca recording; he leaves Werba and Geisen well behind. **Alec Robertson (6/66)**

Richard Wigmore Has Fritz Wunderlich become an even better singer in the half-century since his tragic death, from a fall, just before his 36th birthday? For many people today, he is nonpareil among German lyric tenors. In the early 1960s he became something of a media star in Germany and Austria. Yet with a few exceptions – his *Das Lied von der Erde* with Klemperer, his *Creation* with Karajan, his Tamino with Böhm – his recordings, especially of Lieder, provoked only tempered enthusiasm from British critics.

Alec Robertson's review of Wunderlich's 1965 *Dichterliebe* (above) – well-sung but under-characterised, and hampered by Hubert Giesen's playing – was typical. Alan Blyth was more positive, if hardly euphoric, when the performance appeared on CD in 1990. This certainly wouldn't be my own desert-island *Dichterliebe*, not least because of Giesen's monochrome, rhythmically unimaginative playing of music that cries out for a subtle colourist. Giesen was Wunderlich's mentor in Lieder; and it's frustrating that the singer remained loyal to him both at the Salzburg Festival and on his DG recordings. And yet...Wunderlich's

mellifluous, sensuous timbre, grace of phrasing and impeccable clarity of diction are well-nigh ideal for Schumann's bittersweet cycle of remembered love.

Mike Ashman I agree almost totally.

Except that, after resampling some of the alternatives picked out by yourself in the 'Gramophone Collection' (Awards issue 2006) and our other writers *passim*, I would question 'well-nigh ideal' a little given how Wunderlich uses his voice in this performance (and on the virtually identikit live concerts which have circulated on disc with this pair). But that's almost entirely because there's no dramatic dynamic between voice and piano! Giesen's prosaic accompaniments are a serious limiting factor to one's enjoyment: in the important postludes to the last two songs ('Aus alten Märchen' and 'Die alten bösen Lieder') it's hardly even worth discussing whether he's trying to identify a clear emotion. What we seem to have here is a performance of the cycle in which purely vocal considerations are paramount – rather like those of opera singers of earlier generations who were convinced that all you had to do to

convey a role was to sing what was on the page. Wasn't there a point in the history of Lieder performance, especially on record, when the text, its meaning and its colour, suddenly started to become more important? The general mood impressions of earlier days were replaced by the intense dramatic involvement of a Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau or the realised researches of an accompanist like Graham Johnson. Wunderlich and Giesen are definitely not at that stage. Their lack of distinctive interpretative psychological colour here does not focus the drama as do, say, Fischer-Dieskau (with Eschenbach, DG) or the sometimes un-beautiful but so text-conscious Peter Schreier (with Sawallisch, Philips).

RW Yes, you could never accuse Wunderlich of being over-sophisticated. I'm a huge admirer of Fischer-Dieskau and Schreier, of course. In many ways Wunderlich is their antithesis. With him it is always 'prima la musica'. It was never his way to point textual nuances, or seek out psychological subtleties. Towards the end of the fourth song, 'Wenn ich in deine Augen sehe',

Beautiful tone but no emotion, Wunderlich's perplexing *Dichterliebe*

the betrayed singer-poet recalls the girl's avowal of love. The poignant memory of the three words 'Ich liebe dich', and the harmonic darkening from G major to A minor, imply a change of tone-colour from both pianist and singer. We barely get that here. Similarly, Wunderlich and Giesen, in tandem, gloss over the sudden infusion of Heine-esque scorn at the end of 'Und wüssten's die Blumen', No 8. The piano postlude should shock.

Here it sounds at most mildly perturbing.

Wunderlich remains an innocent to the end of the cycle, where others are tainted and deepened by experience. That said, his fresh, ductile tone, elegant phrasing and a true, 'bound' *legato* are precious assets in this music; and his climactic top A in 'Ich grolle nicht' remains for me the most viscerally exciting single note in any *Dichterliebe* I've heard, live or on disc!

MA The timbre of Wunderlich's singing overall is studiously beautiful – and no complaints either about the tone of sad romance throughout. And yet this is a cycle every bit as dramatic (and complex)

psychologically as Schubert's great trio before. The fact that Schumann has worked so closely on the actual words and the order of the poems gives the cycle a feel of live collaboration with the great poet. So it's even more disappointing that Wunderlich and Giesen give so little special heft to the moments of greatest crisis in this story of a broken-down love. To extend your example above: at the mid-way point in the 16-song cycle comes the first outright declaration of the grief the beloved has caused and the realisation that she has married someone else. 'For it was she who broke / Broke my heart in two' cries out the poet at the end of 'Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen', while the following 'Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen' is a nightmarish picture of the poet at her actual wedding party. Giesen's playing and the tenor's contribution only invest the music in very general terms with any kind of illustration of the emotional journey of the singer/narrator. It's accompanying rather than taking up the equal dramatic partner role that Schumann's piano part seems to suggest.

RW The flaws in this recording are obviously easier to analyse than its virtues, especially in the light of the musical and psychological minutiae sought out by Fischer-Dieskau and many of his successors. Time and again in my jottings I have comments such as 'no dynamic variety', 'over-peddled', 'rhythms plod'. Even when the performers choose what seems like a perfect tempo, as in No 14, 'Allnächtlich im Traume', the effect begins to seem sluggish because of Giesen's rhythmic literalness. Yet – and of course it's a personal reaction – at moments in the cycle I find the timbre of Wunderlich's voice intensely, sometimes uniquely, moving. It has a special plangency between E flat and F sharp at the top of the stave that gives an almost unbearable ache to the climax of 'Ich will mein Seele tauchen', and the final 'strömt meine Thränenflut' of 'Ich hab' im Traum geweinet' – in this latter song Wunderlich almost makes you forget that Giesen's muffled drum beats are neither *pianissimo* nor *staccato*.

MA That's a nice pinning-down of what I called rather loosely the tenor's 'tone of

sad romance'. But your criticism of Giesen's 'drum beats' reminds me of another frustration of this pianist's performance. I think we'd agree that the keyboard's silences (and rests!) speak volumes in this cycle, and Giesen – compared to say Brendel or Johnson – is often quite imprecise about them. Schumann's musical drama of waiting for something to happen (or not), or a meaning to become clear (as in, especially, the postludes to the final two songs), is an equivalent of Heine's poetic irony and is undersold by this apparent vagueness.

RW Giesen is far from alone in shortening Schumann's crucial rests in 'Ich hab' im Traum geweinet' – it's remarkable how many pianists are sloppy in their timing here, with Brendel and Johnson among the few exceptions!

We probably both wish that Wunderlich had recorded *Dichterliebe* with, say, Gerald Moore or Jörg Demus, who would doubtless have encouraged more subtlety of colour and inflection. As to how he would have developed had he lived beyond 35...Brigitte Fassbaender, who as a tyro mezzo sang Olga to Wunderlich's Lensky, described Wunderlich as 'an intuitive, spontaneous artist who would have become a great, great Lieder singer had he lived'. His recordings of both *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Dichterliebe* – the plum tenor cycles – are inevitably unfinished business. While Wunderlich's honeyed timbre ensures rueful tenderness aplenty, Heine-esque irony and *Weltschmerz* are often short-changed. Yet even as I write this, I think of the mingled bitterness and pain he brings to the mordant wedding song, 'Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen', finally fading away in resignation, or the bite in his tone in the last song, vehement, angry, without histrionics. 'Intuitive, spontaneous': Fassbaender was spot-on there. And in some moods I find the eager freshness of his singing – call it naïve – a refreshing contrast to the sophistication and dramatic intensity of so many modern performances.

MA Okay – your comments and Fassbaender's make me feel mean and Beckmesser-ish as I pick away at details! At the end of the day, yes, I find the Wunderlich/Giesen interpretation of the cycle as yet too generalised and unspecific to do full justice to Schumann's most cunning workings of Heine. And yet this really should be a case of being grateful for what we have, given the time and circumstances of its making – and, because of the tenor's voice, the catalogue is certainly richer for having this performance in it. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

British piano concertos

There may be dozens of British examples, but the piano concerto as a genre remains something of a native Cinderella as compared with its violin or cello counterparts. **Geraint Lewis** investigates

There used to be rumours that the youthfully ambitious Harriet Cohen (1895-1967) was so desperate to bag a career-enhancing piano concerto from Sir Edward Elgar that she would hover at a bus stop outside his London home in Hampstead in the hope of pouncing should he happen to emerge! And Elgar did periodically tinker at a proposed concerto in 1909, 1914, 1917 (promising it to pianist Irene Scharrer in 1918), 1925-26 and finally in 1932-33, when it acquired the optimistic 'Op 90' in his catalogue, leading even to discussions for a recording with HMV. But it was sadly

never to be: the sketches for three discrete movements remained disparate, and failed to cohere properly. Rather poignantly, in 1956 Cohen did finally get to premiere the D major *Poco andante* middle movement at the Royal Festival Hall, in an arrangement for piano and strings by Percy Young. It remains a delicate sliver of wistful, salon-like music which never really aspires to concerto status despite Elgar's evident fondness for it (he would reportedly ask his muse Alice Stuart Wortley, the 'Windflower', to play it to him again and again). The surrounding sketches for grander music were clearly

of a different order, but there has never been a convincing 'realisation', let alone completion, of a tragic pipe dream arguably best left as such. Cohen did become an Elgar favourite, nonetheless, and he would address her on paper as 'Harrietinachenietta'.

Cohen was, notoriously, already the mistress of Arnold Bax when she got to know Elgar, but although Bax wrote several major *concertante* works for her, like the *Symphonic Variations* (1918) and *Winter Legends* (1930), she never got a 'piano concerto' proper from him. By 1926 she already had her pianistic claws firmly into Ralph Vaughan Williams, to whom she promised '10,000 kisses' if he'd finish his Piano Concerto; and he did, kisses notwithstanding – but not until 1933. Somehow or other his actual writing for the piano was of a Busoni-like muscularity totally unsuited to Cohen's small hands, and she was often drowned out by the large orchestra, in spite of Adrian Boult's best efforts at balancing. This sad initial failure must be contrasted with the runaway success at the 1930 Proms of John Ireland's much more accessible and immediately attractive concerto for his unknown student Helen Perkin. This was the first British example since Ireland's teacher Sir Charles Stanford's Second Piano Concerto to achieve genuine popularity and a place, for a time at least, in the repertoire of great international pianists. But by the late 1960s these too had largely disappeared from concert programmes, hardly ever to return. And no other example – before or since – can truly be said to have made much headway in public. So our many brave recording companies must be saluted for investing in dozens of examples down the decades; in so doing, they have rescued many a deserving Cinderella from total oblivion. **G**



The pianist Harriet Cohen who inspired concertante works from Vaughan Williams, Bax and, almost, Elgar



Stanford
Piano Concerto No 2
 Finghin Collins *pf*
 RTÉ National SO /
 Kenneth Montgomery

Claves (5/11)

The lazy cliché that Stanford was just a British Brahms is demolished when this music is heard. Moiseiwitsch played this powerful piece in 1919, and to the inevitable rejoinder that it echoed Rachmaninov's No 2, Stanford could at least reply that he'd conducted that with its composer as soloist! An exemplary Irish partnership on disc here does it more than justice.



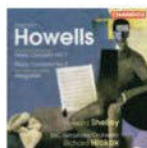
Ireland
Piano Concerto
 John Lenehan *pf*
 RLPO / John Wilson
 Naxos (12/11)

Stanford pupil John Ireland's intimate relationships were often complex and unhappy. The end of a 10-year involvement with a former choirboy (the famous 'Holy Boy') rebounded into an infatuation with his student Helen Perkin. Even though this also ended bitterly, the concerto written for her as a Proms debut gift was soon being played by Rubinstein, among others. Lenehan understands its painful ecstasy.



Bliss
Piano Concerto
 Solomon *pf*
 Liverpool PO / Adrian Boult
 EMI Classics (8/72^R)

The British *enfant terrible* of US descent Sir Arthur Bliss was soon enveloped by the UK Establishment (BBC Musical Director from 1942; Master of the Queen's Music in 1953). His big-boned concerto was premiered by Solomon and Boult at the 1939 New York World's Fair as a gift to the American people. A noble failure it may be, but its troubled pre-war romantic heart is movingly captured by these artists safely back in Blighty in 1940.



Howells
Piano Concerto No 2
 Howard Shelley *pf*
 BBC SO / Richard Hickox
 Chandos (3/01)

It's hard to forget that the over-sensitive Herbert Howells shelved this piece for the rest of his long life after a stupid critic shouted 'Thank God that's over' just before being drowned out by redoubled applause (led by Vaughan Williams) at the premiere. The work is a masterly balance of form, content and idiomatic writing and exudes a *joie de vivre* and exuberance that should quickly have opened many doors. Shelley and Hickox more than make up for the enforced neglect.



Rawsthorne
Piano Concerto No 2
 Peter Donohoe *pf* Ulster
 Orchestra / Takuo Yuasa
 Naxos (5/03)

Born in 1905, Alan Rawsthorne was of the same generation as Walton, Tippett and Britten, and for much of his life enjoyed considerable success and a high profile. But his present obscurity is hardly merited and though a full-scale revival is unlikely this magnificent recording in Peter Donohoe's heroic series of forgotten British piano concertos brings back to life a Festival of Britain score brimming with vital ideas and effervescent writing with a 'proper-tune' finale.



Pickard
Piano Concerto
 Fredrik Ullen *pf* Norrköping
 SO / Martyn Brabbins
 BIS

John Pickard's coruscating concerto was premiered by Andreas Boyde in Dresden in 2000. On this recording Swedish virtuoso Fredrik Ullen sails through the formidable difficulties with amazing élan, supported expertly by his compatriots under Pickard's most eloquent champion on the podium. Balancing relentless rhythmic drive with darker lyrical introspection, this compelling three-panel work amazingly still awaits a British concert premiere.



Britten
Piano Concerto
 Sviatoslav Richter *pf*
 ECO / Benjamin Britten
 Decca (8/71)

Benjamin Britten was a dazzling pianist, so he showed Henry Wood's pre-war Proms audience exactly what he could do – and how! Some (like his teacher Frank Bridge) complained that it was all too brittle and brilliant, and in 1945 a haunting new slow movement clinched the concerto as a whole. After years of neglect it was rehabilitated by Britten's great friend Richter in a recording made at Snape in 1970 which revels in the music's kinship with Prokofiev and Shostakovich.



Benjamin
Duet
 Pierre-Laurent Aimard *pf*
 Mahler CO / George Benjamin
 Nimbus (5/13)

I make just one happy exception in including a work not designated Piano Concerto, simply because *Duet* (2008) is a concise wonderscape of what a piano and orchestra can create together in the hands of a genius. Every gesture tells and the memorable material is calibrated to create an abstract drama that says precisely all it needs to. This definitive performance by the dedicatee also brings you George Benjamin's scalp-tingling masterpiece *Written on Skin*.



Vaughan Williams
Piano Concerto
 Piers Lane *pf*
 RLPO / Vernon Handley
 Classics for Pleasure (11/95)

Poor Harriet Cohen struggled with this masterpiece to little effect, even though RVW was pleased, and Bartók, no less, impressed. A revision for two pianos in 1946 didn't help much but had a magical new coda which was added to the solo version. This came back to life under Vernon Handley's masterly advocacy for Howard Shelley and later here with Piers Lane on a superb disc with Delius's uneven Piano Concerto and Gerald Finzi's sublime little *Elogue*.



Tippett

Piano Concerto Steven Osborne *pf* BBC Scottish SO / Martyn Brabbins
 Hyperion (12/07)

Taking us gently by the hand, the piano leads the way into the magical multi-layered landscape of Michael Tippett's first opera *The Midsummer Marriage* (1946-52). Transcending the time of its composition more clearly than any other of my choices, this music creates its own temporal dimension, and articulates, as it unfolds, a discourse with structure and

archetype quite unique in these works. Beethovenian rhetoric becomes an Orphic dialogue of struggle and release, and a ravishingly poetic episode in the dancing finale is, for me, one of the most precious pages ever penned. Steven Osborne is a master-pianist and this glowing, humane performance is well-nigh perfect.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Verdi's *Otello*

The past eight decades have seen many recordings of this tenor-led operatic masterpiece. Trawling through them all, **Richard Lawrence** finds at least three very special *Otellos*, and some electric conducting

Verdi and Wagner were almost exact contemporaries, born a few months apart in 1813. Wagner died at the age of 69 in 1883; Verdi was 87 when he died in 1901. How would posterity rate Verdi if he, too, had died in 1883? It's possible that without the final operatic masterpieces, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, his reputation would rest primarily on the Requiem of 1874. We have God to thank for Verdi living on. For Verdi living on to compose *Otello* we have to thank Giulio Ricordi, his publisher, who planted the idea in 1879, and Arrigo Boito, the librettist: between them they played the initially dubious Verdi with infinite tact and encouragement. Boito, a composer himself, produced a superb, taut libretto that improved on the original by, among other things, dropping Shakespeare's Act 1 and setting the entire action in Cyprus. The premiere at La Scala, Milan, on February 5, 1887, was a huge success. The cast was led by Francesco Tamagno, who had previously sung Gabriele Adorno in the revised *Simon Boccanegra* and the title-role in the four-act *Don Carlo*. The part of Otello has been one of the pinnacles of the tenor repertoire ever since; but it's worth noting that until a very late stage the opera was to be called *Iago*.

THE EARLY RECORDINGS

Our first recording comes from La Scala in 1931/32, and it's astonishingly good for its age. **Carlo Sabajno** gets disciplined singing from the chorus in Act 1 ('Vittoria!' and 'Fuoco di gioia!'). Nicola Fusati and Apollo Granforte as Otello and Iago are imprecise with their rhythm, but Fusati has ringing top notes and Granforte colours his tone to

excellent effect. Like many of his successors, Fusati misaccentuates the opening phrase of Otello's monologue in Act 3: this may have soon become common practice, but it's correct on the Toscanini recording – and Toscanini played in the orchestra at the premiere. There's a weedy cor anglais in Act 4, but overall this is well worth hearing. Almost as good, but in variable sound, is the broadcast from the New York Met in 1938. There's plenty of fire to **Ettore Panizza's** conducting – Otello's smothering of Desdemona is as vivid as Fafner clubbing Fasolt to death in *Das Rheingold* – but the USP is the chance to hear Giovanni Martinelli, the reigning Otello of the day. He starts the first phrase of the love duet a bit flat – as does Fusati, come to that – but soon improves. Lawrence Tibbett is a subtle, understated Iago.

RAMÓN VINAY

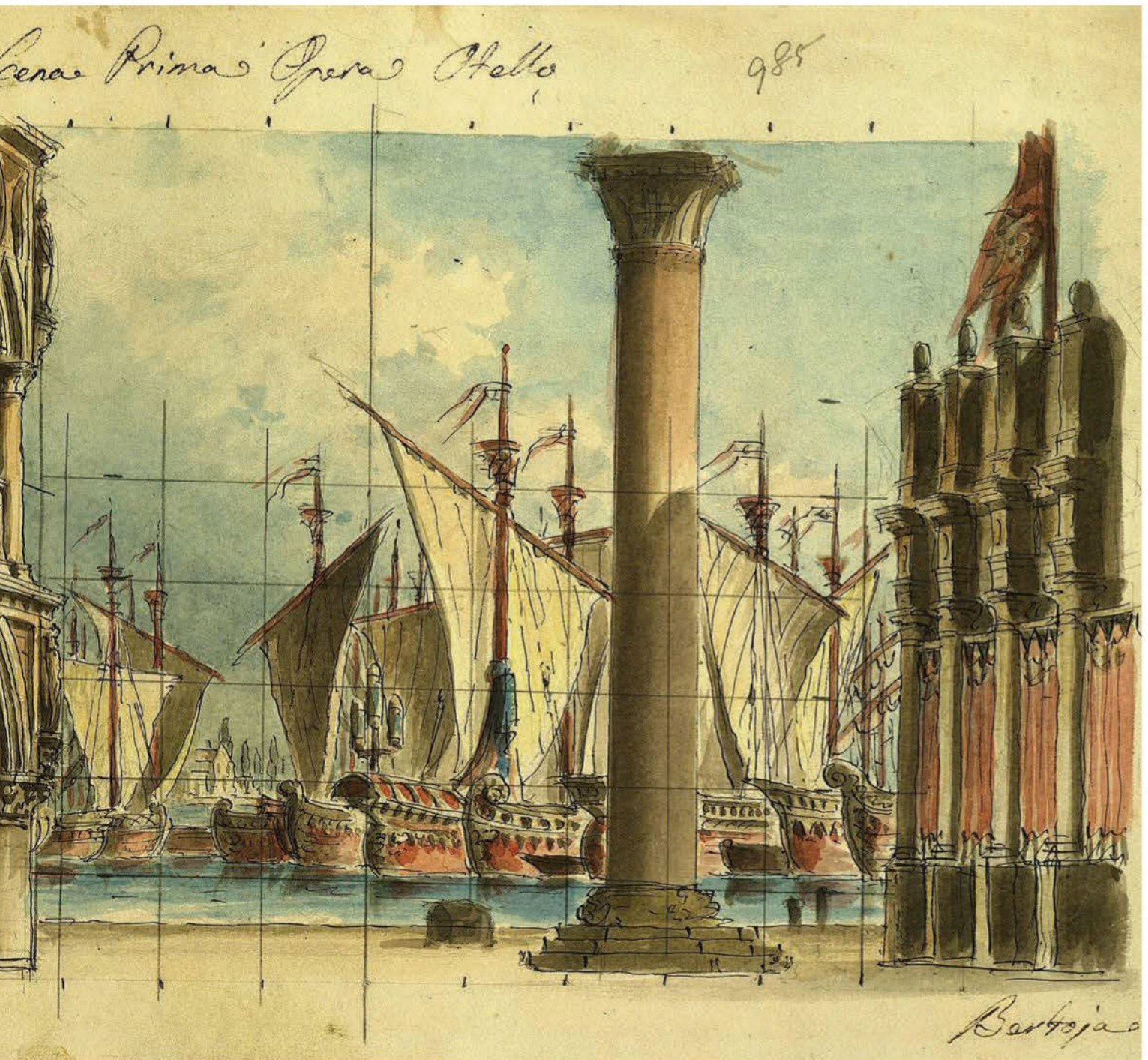
The leading Otello in the years immediately after the Second World War was the Chilean tenor Ramón Vinay. He began his professional career as a baritone, and it's the baritonal darkness of his voice that informs his recorded performances. There's a live 1955 recording from Covent Garden under Kubelík (9/06; available on iTunes and elsewhere as a download), but here we will focus on three earlier ones, of which two are outstanding. The famous one is **Arturo Toscanini's**, assembled from NBC broadcasts in 1947. The conducting is electric, it goes without saying. Toscanini coached Vinay in the part, and the singer repaid his mentor with a performance of



Set design for the opening scene of *Otello* at La Fenice, by Pietro Bertoja (1828-1911)

searing intensity. Giuseppe Valdengo's Iago is not quite of this calibre; neither is Herva Nelli, who runs out of puff at the end of Desdemona's first sentence. Two unusual features are the use of solo voices in the scene with the children; and (even harder to justify) the cellos doubling the double basses at the octave when Otello enters to murder his wife.

Less familiar is the version from the Met, broadcast a year later. **Fritz Busch's** conducting is immensely exciting. The Act 1 choruses are vivid; the brass is menacing as Otello waits to eavesdrop on Iago and Cassio; and the full orchestra,



tutta forza, at the smothering of Desdemona is stupendous. Vinay is even more moving than he was for Toscanini. As for Iago, the sudden *pianissimo* as he warns Otello of jealousy, and the curl of the lip as he recounts Cassio's supposed dream, are but two instances of the way Leonard Warren acts with his voice. Licia Albanese, whether loving, wheedling or despairing, is an excellent Desdemona.

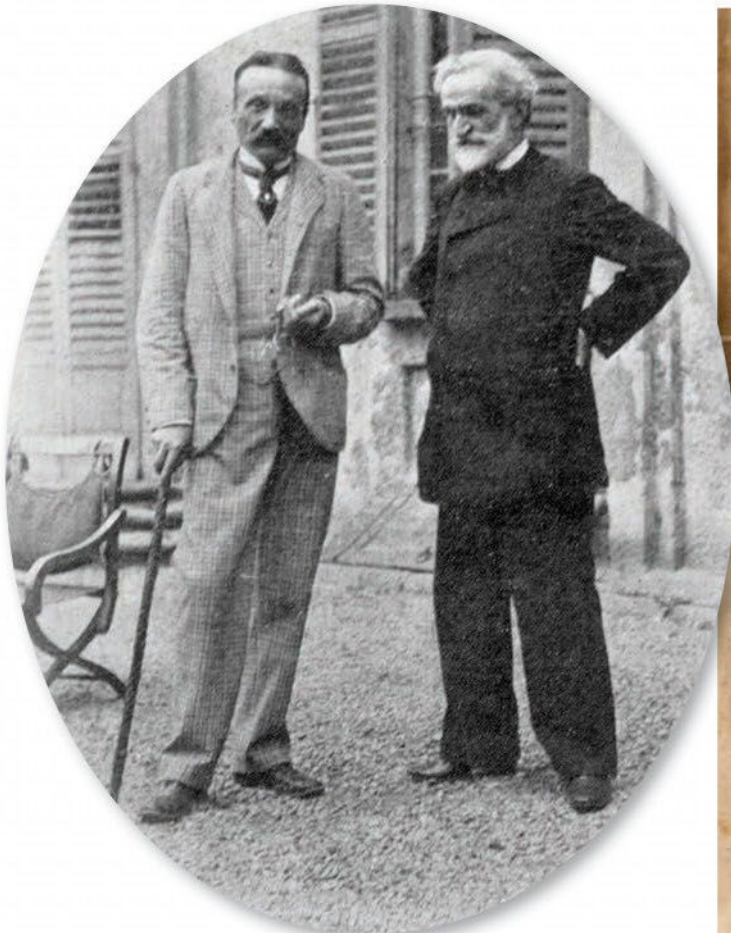
The Vinay performance under **Wilhelm Furtwängler**, live from Salzburg in 1951, is not so well recorded, the sound tinny when it isn't harsh. The all-important opening 'Esultate!' that

establishes Otello's authority comes from upstage and is taken too fast, thereby lessening the impact. But Furtwängler, like Busch, doesn't accelerate at the end of the vengeance duet, thereby very definitely increasing the impact.

THE AGE OF STEREO

Further live performances by Vinay from the 1950s have appeared over the past few years, but it was some time before *Otello* benefited from a recording in stereo. Mario Del Monaco, only three years younger, was soon treading on Vinay's heels. His 1950 recording on Myto from

Buenos Aires, billed as his first ever *Otello*, can safely be ignored. A studio recording in mono that appeared on Decca in 1954 with Alberto Erede conducting is no longer officially available. In 1961, however, the same principals featured in a stereo version in which the opera was given the full Decca treatment, with the stage movement and balance that are associated with John Culshaw (the producer here, with Christopher Raeburn). It is not a subtle performance. Del Monaco is rhythmically imprecise at his first entry, lumpy in the love duet, ungainly in his phrasing of 'eburnea mano' and, later in



From left to right: Verdi (right) with his librettist Arrigo Boito; Verdi (left) with Francesco Tamagno, who created the role of Otello for the 1887 premiere

Act 3, hammy at 'Dio! mi potevi scagliar'. Aldo Protti delivers Iago's Credo powerfully, but he makes little of the insidiousness of 'Cassio's dream'. Renata Tebaldi, on the other hand, phrases beautifully and is effectively restrained at her farewell to Emilia.

Herbert von Karajan and the Vienna Philharmonic are terrific; but the main reason for buying this set is to experience the Act 3 ballet that Verdi was obliged to add for the Paris Opéra in 1894 – if only to confirm your views about 19th-century Parisian taste.

Better by far is the performance conducted by **Tullio Serafin** from the year before (1960). The Rome Opera Orchestra

is not in the same league as the Vienna Philharmonic, and the recording quality is not state-of-the-art; the principals, though, are magnificent. Jon Vickers had not then sung the role on stage, but his interpretation has a maturity to be wondered at. 'Dio! mi potevi scagliar' is near perfect: correctly accentuated, sung *mezza voce* with no muttering, truly *dolcissimo* at 'l'anima acqueto'. If the top B flats aren't quite there in the duet with Iago, the love duet has a manly robustness and the final 'Un bacio' as he lies dying is tenderness itself. His Desdemona, Leonie Rysanek, is a match for Tebaldi in her passionate dignity; Tito Gobbi, the leading Iago of the time, rightly eschews maniacal

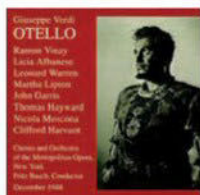
laughter after the Credo, then chills the blood at 'È un'idra fosca'. Serafin misses nothing: note, for instance, the chromatic phrases for cornet and trumpet when Otello speaks of battle in the love duet. By the time Vickers came to record the role for **Herbert von Karajan** in 1973 he had sung it many times in the theatre. He is just as authoritative, just as tender as he had been for Serafin; unfortunately, the recording is marred by too wide a dynamic range, and there's a cut in the Act 2 chorus as well as the more common abridgement of the concertato in Act 3.

After Serafin there was a long gap before the appearance of a new studio version from EMI. The critics expressed

HISTORIC CHOICE

New York Met Opera / Busch Preiser 90377

The historic choice has to be one of the performances starring Ramón Vinay, the outstanding Otello after Martinelli and



before Domingo. By a small margin, this one from the New York Met under Fritz Busch is the one to go for. Otherwise, the famous Toscanini set is still magnificent.

STEREO CHOICE

Rome Opera / Serafin

RCA 09026 63180-2

What a pity that Tito Gobbi's Iago was never captured on film. But this recording is treasurable all the same, with Gobbi partnered by the young Jon Vickers. Leonie Rysanek is in fine voice as Desdemona, and Tullio Serafin conducts superbly.



DVD CHOICE

Royal Opera / Solti Opus Arte OAR3102D

This misses being top choice only because



it's so hard to choose between Solti and Levine in productions by Elijah Moshinsky. Domingo is unbearably moving in both; perhaps Sergei Leiferkus just has the edge over James Morris, but it's a near thing.

disappointment in **John Barbirolli**, especially in comparison with an idiomatic *Madama Butterfly* recorded in Rome a year or two previously. The star was James McCracken, who had had enormous success at Covent Garden. Without his imposing physical presence, however, McCracken comes across as rather two-dimensional, outclassed by Gwyneth Jones's warm, womanly Desdemona. 'Dio! mi potevi scagliar' sounds hollow, as though recorded in a different acoustic. On the stage, McCracken's nemesis was Gobbi; in the recording, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, as you would expect, brings a Lieder singer's refinement to Iago's music without matching Gobbi's superb characterisation. Barbirolli keeps a firm grip on the vengeance duet but speeds up in the postlude.

THE OTELLO OF OUR TIME - ON CD

The McCracken performances at Covent Garden were conducted by **Georg Solti**. In 1977, Solti made a fine – yet easily overlooked – recording in which Carlo Cossutta makes a strong entrance; and after the storm, the Vienna State Opera chorus manages a beautiful *pianissimo*. If Gabriel Bacquier's Iago sounds strained here and there, Margaret Price sings exquisitely as Desdemona and Kurt Moll is a sonorous Lodovico. Cossutta curses his wife powerfully, but the high point is a well-sung 'Dio! mi potevi scagliar' with a really well-turned ascent to 'quel raggio'. Solti's 1991 recording was taken from concert performances in Chicago and New York. Luciano Pavarotti is open-throated but, to tell the truth, rather dull, as is Leo Nucci. Kiri Te Kanawa raises the tone, and Anthony Rolfe Johnson is a sensitive, almost delicate Cassio: not really enough of an incentive to buy.

The supreme Otello of our own time is Plácido Domingo. Like Vinay, he started out as a baritone, and has now of course reverted to singing baritone roles; perhaps he too – though I rather hope not – will take on the part of Iago. Domingo's first studio version, conducted by **James Levine**, came out in 1978 – 'Domingo's Otello is a magnificent achievement,' wrote Alan Blyth in his review for *Gramophone*. Domingo went on to enjoy a significant partnership with Carlos Kleiber at Covent Garden in the 1980s; it's a great pity that no recording documenting this has been issued commercially, but there's an 'unofficial' recording from La Scala (available on iTunes and elsewhere as a download), worth hearing for the slithery *portamento* that Kleiber gets from the strings as Piero Cappuccilli finishes his account of



Domingo's 'utterly magnificent' Otello - 1992

'Cassio's dream'. For the 1985 EMI version, the La Scala orchestra was conducted by **Lorin Maazel**. This provided the soundtrack for the Zeffirelli film, of which more anon. As with Karajan in 1973, it's often either too loud or too soft; but this stricture doesn't apply to Justino Díaz, who is tellingly quiet at points in Act 2 and who is almost unique in singing a decent trill when Iago complains to Roderigo of being merely 'his Moorship's ancient'. Domingo gets off to a good start with a strong, accurate 'Esultate!', and sings with burnished tone throughout.

Even better is the live performance from Vienna in 1987. Anna Tomowa-Sintow lingers too much here and there but she is splendidly passionate: upfront, not wilting, she is memorable in the usually interminable Willow Song. Renato Bruson delivers a powerful Credo and is equally forceful when ordering Emilia to say nothing about the handkerchief. Domingo is again in fine voice, and **Zubin Mehta** presides over excellent work from chorus and orchestra. The sound, too, is excellent.

There's no such drawback to the studio recording from Paris, made in 1993. Sergei Leiferkus, so bluff in the drinking song (with a precise, in-tune, downward chromatic scale), is vicious when he doffs the mask for his Credo. Cheryl Studer sings the Willow Song with pure tone, following it with an Ave Maria of great delicacy. **Myung-Whun Chung** favours fast speeds, but there's still plenty of weight to 'Si, pel ciel' at the end of Act 2. Above all, there's Domingo again: urgent and ecstatic in the love duet, urgent and desperate with Iago – his thrilling *crescendo* at 'Othello's occupation's gone' matched by the conductor – and noble at the end.

There are some good things about Gustav Kuhn's live 1991 recording from Tokyo (Koch Schwann, 6/92), especially Bruson's Iago and Maria Guleghina's Desdemona, but Corneliu Murgu's stentorian, graceless Otello rules it out. That leaves, after another long gap on CD,

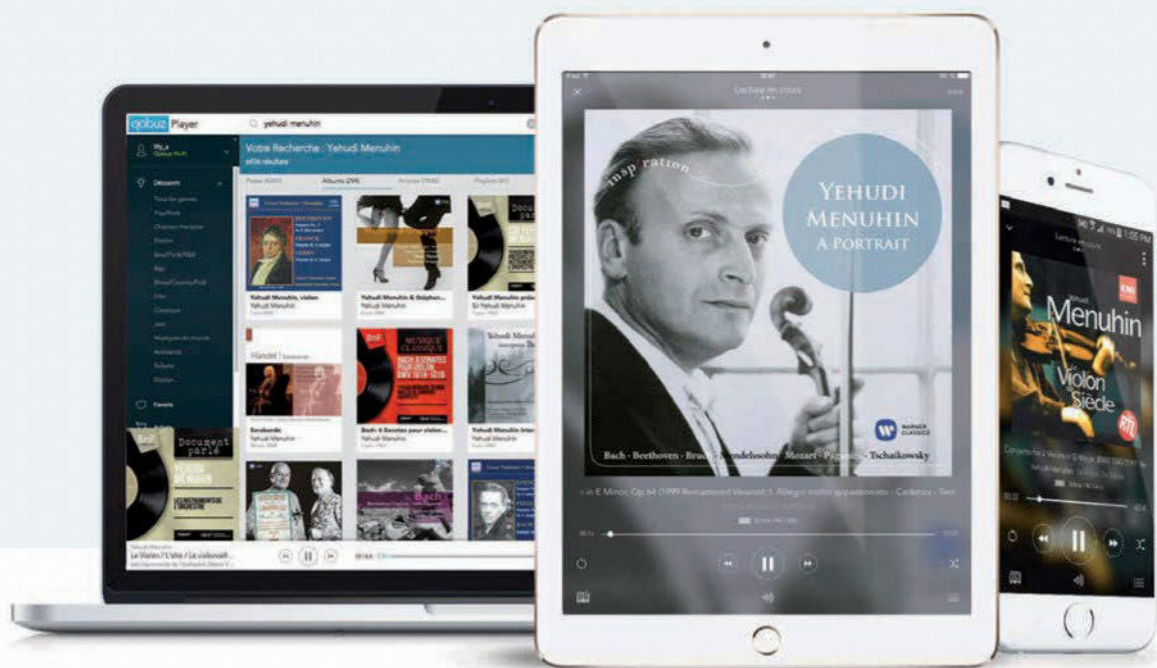
SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1931/32 Fusati ^o , Carbone ^o , Granforte ^l ; La Scala, Milan / Sabajno	Preiser (S) ② 20012
1938 Martinelli ^o , Rethberg ^o , Tibbett ^l ; NY Met Op / Panizza	Naxos (S) ② 8 111018/19 (2/06); Myto (M) ② MCD051H097
1947 Vinay ^o , Nelli ^o , Valdengo ^l ; NBC SO / Toscanini	RCA (M) ② GD60302 (12/53 ⁿ , 3/92); (S) ② 82876 67893-2; Naxos (S) ② 8 111320/21; Opus Kura (B) ② OPK7048/9
1948 Vinay ^o , Albanese ^o , Warren ^l ; NY Met Op / Busch	Preiser (F) ② 90377 (12/99)
1951 Vinay ^o , Martinis ^o , Schöffler ^l ; VPO / Furtwängler	Archipel (S) ② ARPCD0187 (2/96 ⁿ)
1960 Vickers ^o , Rysanek ^o , Gobbi ^l ; Rome Op / Serafin	RCA (M) ② 09026 63180-2 (11/61 ⁿ)
1961 Del Monaco ^o , Tebaldi ^o , Protti ^l ; VPO / Karajan	Decca (B) ② 475 9984DOR2 (10/61 ⁿ , 3/87 ⁿ)
1968 McCracken ^o , Jones ^o , Fischer-Dieskau ^l ; New Philh / Barbirolli	EMI (M) ② 565296-2 (10/69 ⁿ , 11/84 ⁿ)
1972/73 Vickers ^o , Freni ^o , Glossop ^l ; BPO / Karajan	DG (F) ② 073 4040GH (8/05)
1973 Vickers ^o , Freni ^o , Glossop ^l ; BPO / Karajan	EMI (M) ② 456450-2 (10/74 ⁿ , 4/88 ⁿ)
1977 Cossutta ^o , Price ^o , Bacquier ^l ; VPO / Solti	Decca (B) ② 460 756-2DF2 (9/78 ⁿ , 4/99)
1978 Domingo ^o , Scotto ^o , Milnes ^l ; Nat PO / Levine	RCA (M) ② 74321 39501-2; (S) ② 88697 44820-2 (2/79 ⁿ , 3/86 ⁿ)
1982 Atlantov ^o , Te Kanawa ^o , Cappuccilli ^l ; Verona Arena / Peskó	NVC Arts/Warner Vision (F) ② 4509 99214-2 (A/97 ⁿ)
1983 Craig ^o , Plowright ^o , Howlett ^l ; ENO / Elder (sung in English)	Chandos (F) ② CHAN3068 (3/84 ⁿ , 12/01)
1985 Domingo ^o , Ricciarelli ^o , Díaz ^l ; La Scala, Milan / Maazel	EMI (B) ② 358670-2 (10/86 ⁿ)
1987 Domingo ^o , Tomowa-Sintow ^o , Bruson ^l ; Vienna St Op / Mehta	Orfeo (M) ② C698 0721 (11/07)
1991 Pavarotti ^o , Te Kanawa ^o , Nucci ^l ; Chicago SO / Solti	Decca (F) ② 433 669-2DH2 (11/91)
1992 Domingo ^o , Te Kanawa ^o , Leiferkus ^l ; Royal Op / Solti	Opus Arte (F) ② OAR3102D
1993 Domingo ^o , Studer ^o , Leiferkus ^l ; Op Bastille, Paris / Chung	DG (F) ② 439 805-2GH2 (12/94)
1995 Domingo ^o , Fleming ^o , Morris ^l ; NY Met Op / Levine	DG (F) ② 073 092-9GH (6/04)
2001 Domingo ^o , Frittoli ^o , Nucci ^l ; La Scala, Milan / Muti	TDK (F) ② DV-OPOTEL (12/03); ArtHaus (F) ② 107 090
2009 O'Neill ^o , Schwanewilms ^o , Finley ^l ; LSO / C Davis	LSO Live (M) ② . LSO0700 (11/10)
2013 Kunde ^o , Remigio ^o , Gallo ^l ; La Fenice, Venice / Chung	C Major (F) ② 716508; (F) ② 716604 (9/14)

Key: ^oOtello ^lDesdemona ^lIago

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A scene from Act 2 of *Otello* at the New York Met in 1948, starring the Otello of his time, Ramón Vinay

Colin Davis's live account from the Barbican Hall in London. At his entrance, Simon O'Neill breathes in the middle of the word 'l'armi'; his tone, while not unpleasing, is rather thin. There's some dodgy intonation in the Act 2 quartet, and a half-bar has gone missing near the very end. But this is worth considering as a bargain choice – and it includes libretto and translation.

OTELLO IN TRANSLATION

There's a surprising number of recordings in the vernacular. Two come from Preiser. Singing in German, Torsten Ralf is trumpet-toned for Karl Böhm (Vienna, 1944), and Set Svanholm leads a fine Swedish-language performance for Sixten Ehrling (Stockholm, 1953/54). Two German recordings from Walhall also sound well. Under Herbert Kegel (Leipzig, 1954), Alexander Miltschinoff and Hans Löbel are both stately and gripping at 'Si, pel ciel', as indeed are Hans Hopf and Josef Metternich for Solti (Cologne, 1958).

The particular appeal of the 1983 performance from ENO lies in **Mark Elder's** adoption of Verdi's revision for Paris of the Act 3 concertato. The standard version tends to hang fire – hence the cuts made by many conductors – and Iago's plotting is usually inaudible in the theatre. Verdi tightened up the ensemble and thinned it out: an improvement, but one that hasn't caught on. Charles Craig and Neil Howlett are first-rate – the latter's trill is as good as Díaz's, and his 'Cassio's dream' is vivid – and, one or two problems of balance apart, the performance has a thrilling immediacy.

OTELLO ON DVD

The first thing to say about the Zeffirelli film (EMI) is that it is Zeffirelli's *Otello*, not

Verdi's. In a word, the score has been butchered. And the second thing is that the recording has been transferred more than a semitone too low. (It's conducted by Maazel, and the CD version mentioned above is complete and at the correct pitch.) It is cheesily enjoyable, but there should be a printed warning. The **Karajan** (1972/73) is also a lip-synched film, directed by the conductor himself. This is full of telling detail: Otello's dangerous smile in his fraught scene with Desdemona, his shadow on the wall as he enters in Act 4, the ring falling off his finger as he strangles her. As on the CD recording (seemingly not the soundtrack for the film), Vickers is excellent both as warrior and as lover; the many reaction shots point up Peter Glossop's skill as an actor, and Mirella Freni is touching as Desdemona.

Iago does his laugh after the Credo, the audience applauds – and the music stops. We can only be at the Arena in Verona. The 1982 production by Gianfranco de Bosio, conducted by **Zoltán Peskó**, is actually not bad. Vladimir Atlantov was always more loud than anything else and he fully meets one's expectations here, but he manages a restrained, moving 'Niun mi tema'. Apart from the 'unofficial'

THE TOP CHOICE

Opéra Bastille / Chung DG 439 805-2GH2 Domingo and Leiferkus again on top form, with a tender, vulnerable Desdemona from Cheryl Studer and impeccably responsive



conducting from Myun-Whung Chung. Almost as good are Domingo and Bruson in the live performance from Vienna under Zubin Mehta.

Kleiber CD, this is the only example of the Iago of Cappuccilli, a really fine Verdi baritone. Te Kanawa rises magnificently to Desdemona's outburst at 'E son io l'innocente cagion'.

The other open-air production is from the Doge's Palace in Venice. This is imaginatively staged by Francesco Micheli, with a clever use of video projections by Sergio Metalli. Surrounding Iago with devils during his Credo gives him an inappropriately Mephistophelian character, though; and some might jib at the ending, where the dead Desdemona and Otello both rise before walking off hand in hand.

Myung-Whun Chung is well in command, and Gregory Kunde's well-acted Otello is more tenorish than many of his colleagues in the part.

The remaining three recordings all feature Domingo. The last one, from La Scala in 2001, marked his farewell to the role. In his sixties by then, he unsurprisingly has trouble with the top notes. Nucci, also a veteran, transposes the second part of 'Cassio's dream' down an octave. Graham Vick cleverly has Barbara Frittoli's Desdemona playing blind man's buff with the fateful handkerchief in the children's scene. Like Elder, **Riccardo Muti** opts for the Paris version of the Act 3 concertato.

If this were the only visual record of Domingo's *Otello* it would be treasurable; but we are fortunate to have two more that are even better. Both are directed by Elijah Moshinsky, with Brian Large as the video director. They're different productions, both with costumes – again, different – by Peter J Hall. Not surprisingly, though, there are points of similarity. Iago is very much the secretary, with papers for Otello to sign; during 'Era la notte', the camera shows Otello's misery. And both sets for Act 3 have an enormous painting at the back – hard to make out, but possibly a Deposition from the Cross in the manner of Titian or Tintoretto. **Georg Solti** and **James Levine** give superlative accounts of the score, and Domingo is utterly magnificent. When it comes to performances of this quality, comparisons become meaningless. For Solti, Leiferkus is hail-fellow-well-met, with that characteristic, highly individual edge to his voice; for Levine, James Morris, smoother of tone, has a nice line in ironic smiling. Neither Te Kanawa nor Renée Fleming can be faulted, the latter especially memorable in her perfectly floated 'Salce!' in the Willow Song. How lucky we are that Verdi lived on – and there was still *Falstaff* to come! **G**



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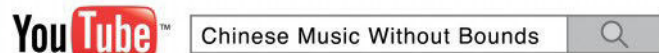
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PLAYLISTS

Explore a variety of music via our themed listening suggestions

This month: Scarlatti recordings through the years and music inspired by flowers. Explore the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

Scarlatti sonatas

Harriet Smith samples the vibrant originality of Scarlatti's keyboard works

As Yevgeny Sudbin's new disc shows (read the interview on page 24), Domenico Scarlatti's extraordinarily adventurous, idiosyncratic and hugely varied legacy of keyboard sonatas offers the perfect fodder for the daring pianist. It's no coincidence that many of the artists on this playlist are Russian, for, as Sudbin recalled, 'During my studies in Russia he was almost considered a "Russian" composer, since his sonatas were standard repertoire for any student'.

One of the fascinating aspects about Scarlatti is that you can take a single sonata and there will be as many views as there are interpreters. Take the Michelangeli and Gould readings of Kk9, for instance, the one flowing and understated, the other prioritising clarity, combined with Gould's inimitable vocalisations; or Horowitz (whose Scarlatti needs no introduction) and Pletnev – poles apart in the tenderly flowing Kk25. Then there's Gilels throwing caution to the wind in the constantly changing textures of Kk125, while the splendidly idiosyncratic Croatian Ivo Pogorelich brings to life with a clipped brilliance the hunt conjured in Kk159. There's no right or wrong, it's merely a matter of taste. Pletnev is more daring still, taking thrilling liberties with speeds and dynamics in Kk29. And we end with two great French pianists, who combine heart and head to extraordinary effect.

- **Sonata in D minor, Kk9**
Michelangeli
Diapason
- **Sonata in D minor, Kk9**
Gould
Sony Classical
- **Sonata in G, Kk125**
Gilels
Classical Moments
- **Sonata in C, Kk159**
Pogorelich
DG



Vladimir Horowitz: supreme in Scarlatti's sonatas

- **Sonata in D, Kk29**
Pletnev
Erato
- **Sonata in F sharp minor, Kk25**
Pletnev
Erato
- **Sonata in F sharp minor, Kk25**
Horowitz
Sony Classical
- **Sonata in D, Kk491**
Horowitz
Sony Classical
- **Sonata in F minor Kk69**
Queffélec
Warner
- **Sonata in D minor, Kk32**
Tharaud
Erato

Spring blooms

Tim Ashley offers a bouquet of works inspired by the delicacy of flowers

'The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la, bring promise of merry sunshine,' Gilbert & Sullivan tell us in *The Mikado*. Most composers, however, are more ambiguous. Flowers embody the transience of nature, as well as its beauty, and frequently suggest images of life, love, desire and loss.

The flowers in Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* waltz with unfettered vitality. Puccini contemplates the beauty of chrysanthemums in his only major work for string quartet, and Mahler, in the Minuet from his Third Symphony, views flowers as the embodiment of natural innocence, unsullied by humanity.

In Mozart's 'Das Veilchen' and Berlioz's 'Le spectre de la rose', however, the imagery darkens as a plucked flower in each song comes to symbolise a lover's willing self-sacrifice for the sake of an ideal beloved. Richard Strauss, in contrast, invests his serene 'Wasserrose' (waterlily) with almost mystic significance.

In Wagner's *Parsifal*, the Flower Maidens in Klingsor's garden attempt to seduce the opera's virginally ignorant hero, while Britten's 'The Sick Rose', from his *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, shudders uneasily at the thought of corruption and decay. Chausson, meanwhile, mourns the passing of 'the time for lilacs and roses' with quiet finality as an expression of regret for lost love.

- **Gilbert & Sullivan** *The Mikado* – The flowers that bloom in the spring
D'Oyly Carte; RPO / Nash
Decca
- **Tchaikovsky** *The Nutcracker* – Waltz
VPO / Levine
DG
- **Puccini** *Crisantemi*
Venezia Quartet
Dynamic
- **Mahler** *Symphony No 3* – Tempo di menuetto (2nd movt)
New York PO / Maazel
New York Philharmonic
- **Mozart** *Das Veilchen*, K476
Seefried, Werba
DG
- **Berlioz** *Les nuits d'été* – Le spectre de la rose
Crespin; Suisse Romande Orch / Ansermet
Decca
- **Strauss** *Mädchenblumen* – Wasserrose
Stich-Randall / Rosbaud
INA Mémoire Vive
- **Wagner** *Parsifal* – Komm, holder Knabe!
Sols; Vienna Staatsoper / Thielemann
DG
- **Britten** *Serenade* – Elegy
Pears; Tuckwell; LSO / Britten
Decca
- **Chausson** *Le temps des lilas*
Gens, Manoff
Alpha



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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live music-making and reviews of archived performances available online, including a magnificent Eugene Onegin, historic Karajan and the music of Claude Vivier

Lighthouse, Poole & BBC Radio 3

Kirill Karabits conducts Britten, April 6

Tenor John Mark Ainsley and Bournemouth Symphony principal horn Nicolas Fleury are the soloists for this Kirill Karabits-conducted BSO concert featuring Britten's hauntingly beautiful *Serenade* for Tenor, Horn and Strings. Also on the programme are JS Bach's Suite No 3 – the one which includes the famous 'Air on a G String' – and Mozart's Symphony No 39. bsolive.com; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Royal Festival Hall & BBC Radio 3

Kristjan Järvi conducts the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, April 8

It's London's turn to host the Menuhin Competition this year. More than just a competition, the 10-day event also includes a wealth of public events, one of which is the NYO's 'Totally Teenage' concert. Conducted by Kristjan Järvi, the fire-themed programme features Chad Hoopes, winner of the 2008 Menuhin Competition, as soloist in Daugherty's *Fire and Blood Concerto* for violin and orchestra, as well as Stravinsky's *Fireworks* and his complete ballet score to *The Firebird*. The musicians then take the programme to Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall (April 9) and Manchester's Bridgewater Hall (April 10). The Radio 3 broadcast is on April 11.

southbankcentre.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Seiji Ozawa conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in Mozart and Beethoven, April 10

Conductor Seiji Ozawa's ties with the Berliner Philharmoniker go back 50 years. This concert sees him return to conduct the orchestra after a long absence due to illness, with a programme focusing on the First Viennese School. Mozart's *Serenade* for 13 wind instruments, K361, opens the evening, followed first by Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, and then a work that deserves to be performed far more frequently than it is, namely Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*. For this, Ozawa and the orchestra are joined by the Rundfunkchor Berlin and pianist Peter Serkin.

digitalconcerthall.com

Heinz Hall, Pittsburgh, WQED and online

Organist Cameron Carpenter makes his Pittsburgh Symphony debut, April 15

One can become a little weary of talking about musicians smashing classical stereotypes, but with organist Cameron Carpenter the label sticks a little more convincingly. A composer-

ARCHIVE REVIEW

A dramatically truthful staging of Eugene Onegin from Berlin's Komische Oper



Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky's 'lyric scenes' based on Pushkin can often suffer at the hands of interventionist opera directors, yet here Barrie Kosky triumphs in a dramatically truthful staging at the Komische Oper. The action takes place almost entirely in a meadow. Rebecca Ringst's set, evocatively lit by Franck Evin, includes a busy revolve, framed by trees.

Madame Larina and Filippievna are bottling strawberry jam as the curtain rises and this jam takes on a symbolic significance through Kosky's staging. Each of the characters dips his or her fingers in it for a taste and Tatyana seals her letter to Onegin in an empty jar. An ivory façade provides the interior of Gremin's St Petersburg palace, but we return to the meadow for the denouement, played out in a torrential downpour which ends in Onegin's utter desolation. It's as fine a staging of the opera as I've seen.

Kosky is aided by a terrific young cast, acting out of their skins. Asmik Grigorian's Tatyana is glorious, her soprano beautifully nuanced, with glints of steel in Act 3. Günter Papendell is a light-voiced baritone and makes for a genial Onegin, far less stuffy than usual. Aleš Brisecin is a hot-headed Lensky, Karolina Gumos a flirtatious Olga. Henrik Nánási conducts a lively performance. Strongly recommended. **Mark Pullinger**

Available to view, for free, at theoperaplatform.eu until July 31, 2016

performer (original compositions plus organ transcriptions of other composers' works) whose collaborations stretch into the pop and jazz worlds as well as classical, he performs on the digital International Touring Organ he designed with organ makers Marshall & Ogletree. This concert sees him perform the US premiere of his own transcription of Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, before the orchestra's music director Manfred Honeck leads the Pittsburghers in Shostakovich's Symphony No 10. Listen live on WQED, or a few days later with its Listen on Demand service.

pittsburghsymphony.org; wqed.org

Cadogan Hall, London & Classic FM

Sir Neville Marriner conducts the ASMF, April 15 (broadcast April 22)

On the evening of his 92nd birthday, Sir Neville Marriner conducts the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in an evening of Mozart and Bizet which is then broadcast on Classic FM on April 22. The Austrian pianist Till Fellner is the soloist for Mozart's Piano Concerto No 22, while bookending the concert are Mozart's

Haffner Symphony No 35 and Bizet's sparkling Symphony in C.

asmf.org; classicfm.com

Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

Roberto Devereux, April 16

Soprano Sondra Radvanovsky has taken on the challenge of performing all three of Donizetti's Tudor queens operas in a single season. *Roberto Devereux* now sees her round off the trio, singing the role of Queen Elizabeth I as she is forced to sign the death warrant of the man she loves. Tenor Matthew Polenzani is Devereux, while baritone Mariusz Kwiecien and mezzo Elina Garanča complete the principal quartet. As with the other two operas, this is a new production by Sir David McVicar, and it is conducted by Donizetti specialist Maurizio Benini. metopera.org

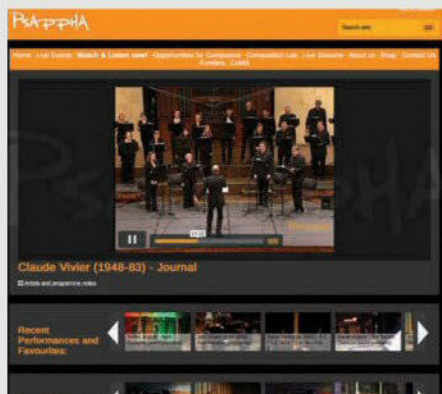
Royal Festival Hall & BBC Radio 3

LPO performs French Masterpieces, April 20

Vladimir Jurowski conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra in a multi-coloured

ARCHIVE REVIEW

Psappha champions two works by Vivier, the second of which contains a premonition of the composer's sudden death



Vivier

Now-overlooked pieces of music theatre by Bernstein, Henze and Anthony Burgess are major attractions to the

live performances archive channel of Psappha, the adventurous new-music ensemble based in Manchester and touring throughout the north of England. With its ritual actions of bowing and clapping, *Journal* by Claude Vivier (1948-83) might tenuously be claimed for the same genre, though the obvious correspondence is with Stockhausen's *Welt-Parlament*, in length (45 minutes), disposition (30-strong solo vocal ensemble and hieratic, organising percussion) and discursive form, which the composer begins by imagining a childhood with the parents he never knew. The music is as teeming with life and laughter as the filming is basic and the performance (with the BBC Singers) phenomenally accomplished.

Journal turns to what Vivier called a 'search for love ranging from the Bible to the brothel', and he knew a few of those once he moved for good from his native Quebec to Paris, having spent three years studying with Stockhausen in Cologne. This 2008 concert of his late, otherwise unrecorded music also includes *Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?*, another multilingual vocal work. Vivier's sudden and violent death is unnervingly anticipated, not in a gloomy meditation, but in settings of invented language with iridescent textures like light filtered through a broken cathedral window, burnished and tinted with his favourite gongs. **Peter Quantrill**
Available to view, for free, at psappha.com

French programme. Dukas's tone-poem, *La pèri*, opens the evening, its initial fanfare a brilliant showcase for the LPO's brass section. Then, Javier Perianes is the soloist for Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No 5, *Egyptian*, followed by Honegger's *Pacific 231* and Debussy's *Images*.

lpo.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Wigmore Hall & live on BBC Radio 3 and RTÉ Irish Gala Concert, April 21

As part of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, John Gillhooly, artistic director of Wigmore Hall, has brought together Irish artists including singers Dame Ann Murray, Tara Erraught, Ailish Tynan, Robin Tritschler and Gavan Ring, pianists Finghin Collins and Jonathan Ware, clarinettist Michael Collins and

harpist Lucy Wakeford, as well as the choirs from the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Royal Academy of Music, for this gala concert. Among many works is the world premiere of a new version of Gerald Barry's String Quartet No 1, commissioned jointly by RTÉ and Wigmore Hall for this concert and performed by RTÉ string quartet-in-residence, ConTempo. wigmore-hall.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3; rte.ie

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon & BBC Radio 3

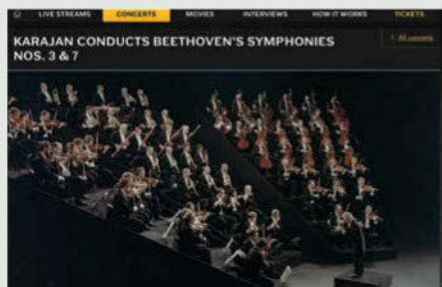
Ex Cathedra performs 'Shakespeare's Odes', April 22

Among the many events marking Shakespeare's birthday, this concert from Ex Cathedra, featuring two semi-staged premieres is an obvious stand-out. The first

is the reconstruction of *The Garrick Ode*, David Garrick's 1769 ode for Shakespeare's Jubilee featuring music by Thomas Arne, with music for the missing choruses commissioned from Sally Beamish. Joining Ex Cathedra's choir, soloists and period-instrument ensemble is Samuel West as narrator. The second half of the concert features Sally Beamish's *A Shakespeare Masque*, with a specially written text by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. For this, Ex Cathedra's choir is joined by youth choirs supplemented by local schoolchildren and a consort of Shakespearean instruments. As well as being broadcast live on Radio 3 (as part of its weekend residency in Stratford), the event is also being filmed for Shakespeare Lives, the digital festival launching on April 23. bbc.co.uk/radio3; bbc.co.uk/shakespearelives

ARCHIVE REVIEW

Karajan conducts Beethoven at the Digital Concert Hall, filmed by avant-garde director Hugo Niebeling



Beethoven

During the late 1960s and early '70s, Karajan and his BPO filmed a cycle of the Beethoven symphonies. The Sixth Symphony, *Pastoral*, was done in 1967 in the CCC studios in Berlin to a soundtrack recorded earlier in the Jesus-Christus Kirche. The director Hugo Niebeling, known at

that point for his documentary films, often on industrial themes, took a radical approach that mixed colour with black-and-white – a concept which achieves striking results, even by today's standards. Images are occasionally starkly back-lit, superimposed and, more surprisingly, blurred to great effect. Often filmed from the conductor's viewpoint or from above, this is a highly imaginative approach, music and image truly synchronised (the thunderstorm is genuinely thrilling!).

Karajan re-engaged Niebeling in 1971 for Symphonies Nos 3 and 7. This time, the director positioned the orchestra in three steeply raked, wedge-shaped boxes rather like a Greek amphitheatre (and the music stands are so well-camouflaged that

they're almost invisible). Many takes were required to achieve the detailed shots of rows of violinists, beautifully aligned, or the hands of the bass players. There are lingering shots of Karajan, eyes closed, and at this period he was at his most photogenic, hair immaculately coiffed, conducting style economical but also very expressive. The performances are lithe, swift and superbly played. Karajan found Niebeling's direction a little *too* modern and re-edited these two films, so the edge is slightly blunted, but they're still fascinating and reveal how advanced his thinking was when it came to filming symphonic repertoire. **James Jolly**
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A back-to-basics amplifier with a big, bold sound, Naim's clever Mu-so Qb – plus, just how significant is the vinyl revival?

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

APRIL TEST DISCS



Vaughan Jones's set of violin works by Vilsmaier, Pisendel and Biber benefits from being heard in the 96kHz/24bit in which it was originally recorded.



Drawing on klezmer, Balkan and gipsy music, Trio C's set is beautifully realised in DSD64 (via natedsd.com) as well as hugely entertaining.

From record-cleaning to classical headphones

This month, there are myriad new products of all shapes and sizes to keep the audio enthusiast entertained



The resurgence of interest in vinyl seems to be unstoppable, and while its true significance remains to be seen, there's no shortage of equipment appearing to feed the needs of both newcomers to LPs and long-term enthusiasts. As explained in this month's Audio Essay (page 144), some of the biggest names in mainstream consumer electronics are taking an interest, but there's also plenty of room for specialist companies, too. What's more, there's no shortage of accessories to help turntable fans make the most of everything from extensive collections to charity-shop LP finds.

New from Keith Monks, one of the best-known names in vinyl maintenance, is the discOver microLight ①, the company's smallest-ever record-cleaning machine. Selling for £1995, the new model is just 39cm wide, and draws on the same technology as past machines from the brand, as supplied to the British Library and US Library of Congress. Using fluids and a vacuum nozzle, it's designed to be super-quiet in operation – the company says you can clean one record while listening to another – and it has a clear acrylic enclosure designed either to allow you to watch the machine's workings in action or customise it with the insertion of a high-definition image in the illuminated front panel.

At the budget end of the cleaning market is the new VC-S machine ② from Austrian-

based turntable specialists Pro-ject. Requiring the user to mix cleaning fluid and spread it on the record using a goat-hairbrush supplied, the machine has a vacuum system to remove the cleaning liquid and dirt from the vinyl surface, and is said to dry the disc in as few as two rotations, each taking just a couple of seconds. There's bi-directional rotation for deep cleaning, and a purpose-designed clamp holds the record in place while also protecting the label from the liquid. The VC-S sells for £299.

Moving away from vinyl, a novel twist in the world of headphones arrives in the form of the new Tonal in-ear range from Taipei-based Chord & Major ③, which includes models designed for various kinds of music: world, ballad, jazz, rock and classical. By altering the materials used and the design of the headphones, the sound is tuned to suit the various musical genres, and the classical model, the 9'13, is said to 'hone in on every instrument' (although the company says the tonal balance is more about presentation of sound rather than limiting the headphones to a single musical genre). Packaged in a wooden presentation box, and with a velvet carrying pouch, interchangeable ear-tips and a cleaning brush, the earphones range from £180 to £200.

All-in-one listening is provided by the latest arrival from Bang & Olufsen, the BeoSound 35 ④, a wing-shaped wireless music system set to sell from £1745 when

it hits the shops in April. Designed to be wall-mounted or positioned on a supplied stand, the new model uses central bass and midband drivers, with tweeters out on the edge of the one-metre wingspan to give a wide soundfield, and can connect to music via AirPlay, Bluetooth or DLNA over Wi-Fi.

There are three control options: the touch-sensitive edge of the unit for hands-on use; the company's BeoRemote handset; or the BeoMusic app on either smartphone or tablet. It can also integrate with a BeoLink Multiroom system, and has built-in access to internet radio, Spotify and Deezer.

Finally this month, the first products are beginning to appear that are compatible with the Meridian-developed MQA music coding system, said to 'offer listeners the opportunity to experience the full, intricate detail of a live performance for the first time in the history of recorded music'.

Although MQA-coded content is back-compatible with existing equipment, to hear its full effect an MQA decoder is needed in the playback chain, and Meridian is among the first to put this in place, with firmware upgrades available across its product range, including the Explorer2 portable DAC/headphone amp ⑤, the Prime headphone amplifier, the 808v6 Reference CD player and the 818v3 Reference Audio Core preamplifier. MQA is also now available in its Special Edition loudspeakers, and the company's 40th Anniversary Systems. ⑥

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Arcam A29

A classic British amplifier with a rich, big-boned sound



ARCAM A29

Type Integrated amplifier

Price £995

Power 80Wpc into 8ohms,
175Wpc into 4ohms

Inputs Six line, mm phono (switchable to line), front panel aux input

Outputs One pair of speakers, headphones, line-level and preamp-level

Other connections Power output for Arcam r-Series components, USB charging port for portable devices

Accessories supplied System remote handset, accessory power cable

Dimensions
(WxHxD) 433x85x275mm

arcam.co.uk

Sometimes it pays to fly in the face of convention or refuse to follow fashion, and that's definitely true in the hi-fi arena. Of late, we've seen products become multifunctional, with CD players also having digital inputs, and systems turning into do-it-all devices with built-in streaming, network music capabilities and the like.

Arcam is no stranger to this do-it-all thinking: after all, its CDS27 player combines SACD/CD playback with music streaming via wired or wireless networking, hot on the heels of similar models from the likes of Onkyo and Yamaha. However, the company has resisted the temptation to add digital input capability into its amplifiers, as have so many other brands, preferring to dedicate them to the simple task of offering clean,

simple signal paths – usually the ideal recipe for the best audio quality.

Of course, Arcam does have a foot firmly planted in the new world of digital audio, in the form of its add-on boxes offering digital-to-analogue conversion and technologies such as Bluetooth. Starting with the entry-level miniBlink Bluetooth audio adapter at just under £100, and going all the way up to the £2200 D33 DAC, the company has devices for just about every computer-based audio need, as befits one of the pioneers of standalone digital converters – it launched its first, the Arcam Delta Black Box, back at the end of the 1980s.

Things have changed rather at Arcam since then: these days the company is a subsidiary of Montreal-based JAM Industries, and its Cambridgeshire

factory – complete with Ernie, the milkfloat used to transfer products from production to storage – has given way to a design and engineering office in a building across the road from the original location, with outsourced manufacturing.

Amplifiers have been an Arcam strength right from the start, the company's first product being the A&R Cambridge A60, launched 40 years ago, and the current line-up is still the focal point of the present-day offering. Using the design experience of the company's founder John Dawson and the manufacturing ability in Rochester, New York, Arcam launched its heavyweight A49 integrated amp a couple of years ago, along with the C49/P49 preamplifier/power amplifier variants.

From this background comes the A29 we have here: rather more modestly powered than the A49, albeit still respectable at 80W per channel against big brother's 200W a side, it's also much more compact and affordable, at £995. The A49 is more than four times that.

The A29 is unmistakably from the same project, however, using a lower-powered variety of the Class G topology found in the flagship amps. This is described by Arcam as being like an amplifier with a turbocharger: multiple power supplies are used, fed from the toroidal transformer, and when running at lower levels – which is likely to be most of the time – the amplifier runs in pure Class A, keeping noise levels as low as possible. Only when the dynamics of the music – or the enthusiasm of the user – requires it does a second power supply kick in, unleashing the full capability of the amplifier.

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The A29's combination of clarity, warmth and power allows it to sit at the heart of a high-quality system.

ARCAM CDS27

Combining CD playback with network music streaming, the Arcam CDS27 is the ideal partner for the A29 amp – it will even share a single handset.



FOCAL ARIA 926

The bold, dramatic sound of the Arcam is well suited to some fast, well-extended speakers: the Focal Aria 926 would likely make a fine combination.



Arcam has been working with Class G for some years, developing it to the point when it was feasible for production amplifiers: launched in the A49, it has now trickled down through the £1595 A39 to this even more affordable model. Here it delivers that 80Wpc power into 8ohms, rising to 175W into 4ohms, and is backed up with Arcam's acoustically damped chassis, six line inputs, a moving-magnet phono stage reconfigurable into a further line-in, and a front-mounted 3.5mm stereo line-in for swift hook-up of portable devices.

Outputs extend to one set of speakers, headphones, and both fixed-level record and variable-level preamp out (for use with an external power amplifier, for example), and there are also two power outputs: one dedicated to Arcam's r-Series accessories, and a USB for charging smartphones and tablets.

It may not have quite the power of its bigger brother, but the G Class amplification of the A49 delivers exactly what it claims

Front-panel buttons select the input to be connected, dim or switch off the display, and allow the main volume control to be used as a balance adjustment, but there are no tone controls, nor the ability to set an input to fixed level (for use with an AV receiver or processor, for example). A system remote handset, able to control other Arcam components, is provided.

PERFORMANCE

The Arcam proves classically simple to set up and use: no tweaking or twiddling, it just needs to be connected up and it delivers. Yes, it shook off an initially rather overblown and ponderous edge over the first couple of days of use, the bass tightening up and allowing the midband and treble more breathing space, but beyond that it's entirely fuss-free.

It's also hugely enjoyable, with a rich, well-scaled presentation to delight those who find some modern amplifiers overly bright or even brash. There's nothing loose or over-warm here, but rather a powerful

bass more than able to deliver all the weight and power of a full orchestra, and yet with the speed and definition to ensure the low frequencies are presented with excellent character.

Listening to Sibelius's *Karelia Suite* (Vienna Philharmonic and Lorin Maazel on Esoteric), the Arcam was particularly notable for its dynamic abilities and the crisp textures of the brass, not to mention the way even subtle nuances of the scoring were clearly audible, while the rich sweep of Elgar's First Symphony (Royal Stockholm PO / Sakari Oramo on BIS) was presented with excellent weight and a fine sense of plenty of power in reserve.

In fact, this is one of the major qualities of the Arcam: it may not have quite the power of its bigger brother, the A49, but that G Class amplification delivers exactly what it claims – low-level purity and yet all the power most listeners could ever need. And that gives the amplifier a highly detailed and exciting sound to solo instruments and voices – it may not quite have the open airiness of some more overtly detailed rivals which are better able to create the sense of the space in which the recording was made, but when it comes to the direct communication of a performance, the A29 is very much within its comfort zone.

Hilary Hahn's recording of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with the Oslo PO (on Sony Classical) conveys the essential clarity of the Arcam, allied to its seemingly limitless energy, with the soloist and orchestra equally convincing, and set in a warm, involving soundstage picture.

The amplifier seemingly delivers, in captivating sound, whatever is presented to it with equal grace and charm – even the phono stage is rather good – and, while some may bemoan the absence of tone controls, the overall sound is such that adjustments are less likely to be needed to make even bright recordings tolerable.

Maybe it's not quite the amplifier for the audiophile train-spotter, in that it isn't all about the last, tiniest element of detail at all cost, but when it comes to making music in a manner that appeals to most listeners, combined with the ability to handle even demanding speaker loads, this Arcam has plenty in its favour. **G**

Or you could try...

Although the Arcam is relatively unusual in being a mainstream £1000-ish amplifier without all the digital frills, it's not entirely without competition at its price.

Naim Nait 5si



An obvious rival is the latest version of Naim's Nait, a series that has been in continuous production for more than four decades: the Nait 5si sells for around the same price as the Arcam, and has a similarly simple specification: the slimline amp has four line inputs, delivers 60W per channel, and is still built in Naim's Salisbury factory. For more information, visit naimaudio.com

Marantz HD-AMP1



Taking a different approach to the sub-£1000

amplifier is the Marantz HD-AMP1, reviewed in these pages last month. Selling for £799 and combining two analogue inputs with a full range of digital connection, including a USB Type B able to handle up to 384kHz/32bit and DSD128, this little amplifier may have a relatively modest 35W per channel into 8ohms, but still proves able to drive a wide range of speakers in convincing fashion. Find out more at marantz.co.uk

Cambridge Audio CXA80 amplifier



Cambridge Audio offers a similar mix of digital and analogue inputs in its 2x80W CXA80 amplifier (£795), which also has a USB Type B input for the connection of a computer, and can even be used with an optional Bluetooth receiver for wireless reception of music from computers, smartphones and tablets. Further details are available at cambridgeaudio.com

● REVIEW NAIM MU-SO QB

Squaring up for high performance

Second model in wireless-system range opens up new possibilities

Some years back – how time flies! – Naim launched a product acclaimed at the time as one of its most significant: the original NaimUniti was an all-in-one ‘just-add-speakers’ system combining CD, radio, network streaming and amplification, and proved the starting point for a rapidly growing line-up within the Salisbury company’s catalogue.

Then, a couple of years back, it did it again with the Mu-so: this time it created a tabletop system with six integrated speakers, 450W of onboard amplification, and Spotify Connect as well as Internet radio, network streaming, Apple AirPlay and Bluetooth.

It was also significant for two other reasons: for the first time, Naim had a product to be sold in the likes of Apple Stores and John Lewis as well as its traditional retailers, and it also marked Naim’s first venture into Chinese manufacturing, under close supervision from the company’s engineering and production teams.

The appeal of Mu-so was twofold: it would bring new consumers to the brand, and also provide existing owners of Naim’s Uniti and ND-series wireless network players with a means of extending their music into other rooms. The only problem was that while Mu-so was ideal as a standalone system for the main living room, at almost 63cm wide it was a bit big for some of the places you might want to use it – kitchens, studies and the like. (Hasn’t stopped it selling like crazy, though.)

That size problem is solved with the arrival of the second Mu-so product, the £595 Mu-so Qb – presumably so-called because it’s cube-shaped. It’s almost twice as tall as the original, at 21cm, but at just under 22cm wide and a shade over 21cm deep, it occupies less than half of the volume of the original, weighs less than half as much, and of course costs £300 less.

Yet crammed into the Qb is almost all of the clever stuff found in the Mu-so itself: the processing engine is exactly the same, as is the input provision – including wired and wireless networking, iOS-compatible USB, and both optical digital and analogue – as is the range of facilities, although the Naim range has also gained Tidal integration since the first model was launched. The principle of the audio design is also retained, with multiple speakers each driven by their own amplifier, but here the configuration is slightly different. In place



NAIM MU-SO QB

Type Wireless music system

Price £595

Drive units Two soft-dome tweeters, two midrange drivers, woofer with two auxiliary bass radiators

Power output 4x50W for treble/midrange, 100W bass

Inputs/sources Internet radio, UPnP streaming, Spotify Connect, Tidal, Apple AirPlay, Bluetooth/aptX, iOS-compatible USB, 3.5mm stereo analogue, optical digital Networking Ethernet/Wi-Fi

Remote control via Naim app on Android/iOS; remote handset optional

Optional extras Interchangeable grilles in Deep Blue, Vibrant Red and Burnt Orange

Dimensions (WxHxD) 218x210x212mm

naimaudio.com

of the six drivers in Mu-so, the Qb has five: two high-frequency tweeters, angled to give a spread of sound, a pair of midrange drivers, each in their own sub-enclosure within the cabinet, and an oval bass unit. The four treble/mid drivers each get a 50W amplifier, while the woofer has 100W.

The cubic design, which is constructed from a very complex – and very rigid – glass-loaded polycarbonate/ABS moulding, meant the downward-venting bass port of the Mu-so wasn’t feasible, so instead the Qb has a pair of metal-diaphragm auxiliary bass radiators, one on each side, and covered by a three-panel wraparound grille which comes in black as standard, but can be exchanged for three brightly coloured alternatives.

The aluminium top panel features the same multifunction touch-sensitive controller found on the original – and on Naim’s flagship Statement amplifier – while the rear panel acts as a heatsink, to which

all the unit’s electronics are mounted. The Qb sits on a clear acrylic plinth, complete with illuminated Naim logo, which gives it a floating look, and, like all the company’s wireless products, can be controlled from the free Naim app, available for iOS and Android devices. A conventional remote handset is an optional extra.

PERFORMANCE

Set-up and operation of the Mu-so Qb is simple: it can ‘inherit’ wireless network settings from a connected tablet or smartphone, and has a couple of settings to optimise it for wherever you want to place it. A simple selector in the app allows you to compensate for bass reinforcement when the Qb is close to a wall, and there’s also a loudness option, best used only if you’re going to use the unit at low volumes – there’s certainly no shortage of bass.

You can also combine the Naim with other devices from the company – Mu-sos, Unitis or NDs – to create a multiroom system, the Qb acting either as master or slave in such a set-up.

How does it sound? Well, very good indeed: there’s not the sense of stereo you get when listening to the original Mu-so close-up, but it’s hard to argue with the ability of the Qb to fill a room with sound that has excellent clarity and intelligibility. Voices, both spoken and sung, have fine weight and presence, and the sound is both spacious and involving. There’s a crispness and clarity that’s hard not to like, while the weight and warmth is remarkable for a system so small.

As with the other Naim wireless music devices, operation via the app is slick and simple, and it’s easy to flick between hi-res playback of music stored on the home network and streaming services such as Tidal or the ‘hi-res’ 320kbps streams of BBC stations including Radio 3.

What Naim has done here is develop a system with the ability to impress those coming from playing music through computer speakers or an inexpensive Bluetooth audio system, while at the same time pleasing existing owners of its streaming systems wanting an extension zone for a kitchen or similar. The company has been surprised by the full extent of the popularity of its original Mu-so system – I just hope it’s ready for what the Qb is about to do. **G**

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● ESSAY

Appearances can be deceptive: is vinyl really back?

A recent burst of activity has witnessed the launch of new turntables from two of Japan's biggest names in consumer electronics – but is this affirmation or just niche-seeking?



The Technics SL-1200GAE (left) and the Sony PS-HX500

Reading the coverage of the 2016 Consumer Electronics Show, held at the beginning of the year in Las Vegas, you might think you'd been transported back a decade or three. Yes, there were some very 2016 products launched, such as the Naim Mu-so Qb – reviewed on page 142 – but what caught the interest of the general media, at least from the hi-fi 'reveals', was the return of Technics to turntable manufacturing. The looks of the model – trotted out to oohs and aahs from the world's websites and social media – are as familiar as its number: the new Technics will be an SL-1200G.

Available later this year, it will be preceded by an ultra-glitzy 'limited edition' SL-1200GAE version this summer, with just 1200 examples – of course! – being made. And while a host of improvements have been made (to everything from the plinth to the motor), and while the 'AE' derivative will come with a magnesium tonearm, the specification of the SL-1200G is very similar to that of the turntable the company discontinued in 2010. It's still direct drive, with the motor coupled directly to the platter; it still has an S-shaped arm, and the stroboscope and the slider to check and alter the speed (and thus the pitch of the music) are still there; even the cueing light, designed to help the user position the arm in the dark, remains.

The only real difference here is the price: the new model will apparently start at around \$4000, and places it way beyond even the ambitious tickets on the last 'new old stock' examples of the original production run, which have presumably been gathering dust in their factory-sealed boxes waiting for their day in the sun to arrive.

For a long time the received wisdom of audiophiles has been that belt-drive was the way to go for true, high-end turntables, due to its ability to isolate the platter (and thus the record and the stylus) from the noise of the motor from the platter. As a result, most audio enthusiasts these days still go for turntables of this type, from Pro-jects to Regas to Linns (and beyond). However, it seems that devotion to the direct-drive Technics is a flame that's never flickered, and that's not just among DJs, whether real or of the bedroom variety.

How sustainable this turntable boom will be remains to be seen, especially if Technics is aiming so high with its return

The demise of the Technics range saw a variety of brands rushing in to 'fill the gap', from the likes of Pioneer and Sony to those best known in the semi-pro audio world. Models appeared using similar technology to the Technics models, while others had little in common beyond similar looks.

What's more, the demise also saw the prices of the originals rocketing, from the aforementioned untouched collectors' items – you can still find the gold-plated SL-1200 Mk5 Limited Edition versions for sale for £12,000 for a pair, or \$8000 for one – to many decidedly ropy examples with all the signs of being heavily 'gigged', such as missing arms or lids, or strange customisations, for £500 or more. There's also a thriving business in servicing and 'personalising' the old Technics players.

Even more surprising is the 'halo effect' of the Technics turntables on old – and I mean 20 or 30 years old – direct-drive

models from other brands, from the famous to the 'whatever happened to?'. The other week on eBay, I followed a battleship Sony turntable donated to a charity up to almost £300, and it seems even wonky and abused old Pioneers, Hitachis and the like are now fetching the kind of money unimagined in the days when we were all ditching them in favour of nice belt-driven turntables while dreaming of one day being able to afford an LP12.

How sustainable this turntable boom will be remains to be seen, especially if Technics is aiming so high with its return to the fray – although of course it should be remembered that the original direct-drive models from the company were never aimed at DJs (well, apart from the kind who played records in radio studios), but were very much intended as hi-fi products, only later being adopted for their new station in life.

However, just as interesting at the Las Vegas-based show was another turntable launched at the same time as the new Technics: Sony's PS-HX500 is a £400 belt-driven player of decidedly more minimalist design, except it has onboard analogue-to-digital conversion which can interface with a home computer, allowing LPs (or singles, for that matter) to be copied to digital files at up to double-DSD 128/5.6MHz resolution.

And it's not alone: around the time these turntables were rolling out, I received a review sample of Korg's DS-DAC-10R, a USB-powered digital-to-analogue/analogue-to-digital converter complete with a built-in phono stage. Selling for around the £500 mark, mainly through 'pro-music' stores, it not only allows the archiving of vinyl records to digital files – complete with a choice of equalisation curves for those old recordings either predating or eschewing the RIAA standard in the company's AudioGate software – but of course also enables all the current high-resolution music formats to be played from a computer to a hi-fi system.

I'll be reporting on the Korg in more detail next month, but for now it's clear the vinyl revival is one to watch. It may be, as many have described it, a niche within a niche, but with products designed to appeal to everyone from style-conscious 'hipsters' to long-term record collectors, it's clearly not going away any time soon. **G**

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NOTES & LETTERS

Brahms brainteaser • Probing Dvořák's 'lyrical soul' • Praising Zandonai's Francesca da Rimini

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Backwards Brahms

I am puzzled by the photo of Mravinsky (Icons, March). Why is his score upside down? Has he been performing some kind of stunt? (He doesn't look the sort.) Or is he expressing disdain for the composition? (He does look the sort.)
David Harvey, via email

The photo had in fact been reversed (and not by Gramophone, we hasten to add!). The score in question is Brahms's First Symphony, the finale, ending at bar 60. Thank you, David Pickett on Twitter, for pointing this out – Ed.



Mystery solved: Brahms's Symphony No 1 in reverse

Endorsing sentimentality

Generally, whenever music critics are offering their opinions, I've noticed that they seem to regard sentimentality as a quality to be eschewed. The dictionary defines the word as 'a moving quality resulting from the artist's sympathetic insight into what is being depicted'. So, in this sometimes cruel, impersonal and often violent world in which we live, I'd like to know what's wrong with a composer pouring out his heart in an expression of deepest emotion.

Barry Borman, via email

A Gramophone record?

I have been a regular and enthusiastic reader and collector of *Gramophone* since December 1945 when I returned home from overseas service in the Second World War.

In those 70 years I have never missed an issue, most of which are still in my possession in spite of a professional career that took me to living for various periods in Australia, the USA, the UK and France. As a result of reading *Gramophone* I began buying

Letter of the Month

Boulez's first live encounter with Wozzeck

The late Pierre Boulez did conduct the first *staged* performance in France of Berg's *Wozzeck* in 1963, as noted in your timeline in 'Remembering Boulez' (February). However, the French premiere of *Wozzeck* occurred on November 9, 1950, a performance for Radio France conducted by Jascha Horenstein. The 25-year-old Boulez was in attendance at both the concert and dress rehearsal. According to Astrid Schirmer, Boulez's artistic secretary, 'For [Boulez] it was a first live experience of *Wozzeck* and left an immense impression'.

Stephen Cera

Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Wozzeck's 1950 French premiere impressed Boulez

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the May issue by April 1. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

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recordings of classical music and have amassed a collection, bought all over the world, ranging from 78, 45 and 33rpms, EPs and LPs (both mono and stereo), cassettes, CDs and MP3s. Is this some kind of record (no pun intended)?

*William Sterling
Sydney, Australia*

Gilbert Kaplan and Mahler

In your obituary (February), you mention that, in addition to his preoccupation with Mahler's Second Symphony, Gilbert Kaplan funded a number of scholarly editions. May I draw attention to perhaps the most accessible and attractive of these, *The Mahler Album* (first published in 1995 and revised in 2011)? This handsome publication contains just about every relevant photograph and a wealth of paintings and contemporary cartoons, not all of which are complimentary! I would urge anyone with an interest in Mahler's life and times to seek it out.

Twelve years ago I visited the second of Mahler's composing huts near Klagenfurt in southern Austria. The building had

been refurbished as a small museum and I was intrigued to find that Kaplan had visited earlier to donate an inscribed copy of his album.

*Dennis Summerfield
Kenilworth, Warwickshire*

In defence of verismo

I enjoyed Hugo Shirley's review of Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* (January). So many critics seem pre-programmed to pour scorn on any Italian opera of that period (except Puccini – and in my youth, a long time ago, he was sneered at too).

I went last year to the cinema to see the Metropolitan Opera performance, and I found that at the end of the Third-Act duet my whole body had become tense, an effect that music seldom has on me. The music also seems to have meant something special to that remarkable artist Magda Olivero; there is, online, a bizarre but touching video of her singing, at the age of 99, with piano accompaniment, part of the duet ('Paolo, datemi pace'). She says that she was told to do this in a dream.

Timothy Goody, via email

Hough's 'special' live Dvořák

Regarding Hannah Nepil's interesting Dvořák article (March), readers may like to know that Stephen Hough's Piano Concerto recording was made with the CBSO at live performances in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, at one of which I was privileged to be present. I believe the live recording will enhance his aim to 'preserve the excitement in the piece...the work's lyrical soul'. It was a very special concert. *Rev'd Brian Gardner, via email*

Just to clarify, Hyperion tells us that they recorded both performances of the Dvořák at Symphony Hall but also had patching sessions, so the final master is a mixture of both – Ed.

Editorial notes

Regarding Rob Cowan's review of the Bartók double disc on SWR Music from Tanja Becker-Bender and Péter Nagy (February), the Solo Violin Sonata does not in fact adhere to the 'tamed' (1945) Menuhin version but to the Urtext version published by Bartók's son Peter in 1994, which *does* include microtones.

In Classics Reconsidered (March), the recording of Karajan's Bruckner 8 with the VPO for DG, made in November 1988, was described as his last recording. (It was released posthumously, Karajan having died in July 1989.) His last recording was actually Bruckner's Seventh, also with the VPO for DG, but recorded in April 1989.

OBITUARIES

A Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and a fine keyboard-player

STEVEN STUCKY

Composer

Born November 7, 1949

Died February 14, 2016



One of the US's leading composers, and a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Steven Stucky has died at the age of 66. Born in Hutchinson, Kansas, and raised

in Kansas and Texas, Stucky studied at Baylor and Cornell Universities where his teachers included Richard Willis, Robert Palmer, Karel Husa and Burrill Phillips. He held positions with many of the major American orchestras including the Los Angeles PO (Resident Composer, 1988-2009) and the Pittsburgh Symphony (Composer of the Year, 2011-12). He taught at Cornell University (Given Foundation Professor of Composition), Eastman (Visiting Professor of Composition, 2001-2) and Berkeley (Ernest Bloch Professor in 2003); in 2014 he joined the composition faculty at the Juilliard School in New York. He was also the artist-faculty Composer-in-Residence at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

His compositional output was extensive, embracing symphonic pieces, a number of concertos, an opera (*The Classical Style* to a libretto by Jeremy Denk after the book by Charles Rosen), and a large number of chamber works, song settings and choral works. It was his *Concerto for Orchestra* of 2003 that brought him his Pulitzer Prize.

Stucky was also an authority on the music of the Polish composer Witold Lutosławski, and in this capacity he curated the Philharmonia Orchestra's centenary celebrations in 2013.

SUSAN ALEXANDER-MAX

Fortepianist and clavichord player

Born October 25, 1942

Died January 26, 2016



The American-born, British keyboard player has died at the age of 73. A graduate of the Juilliard School, she won a scholarship to study with

Ilona Kabos in London, where she settled. She was Professor of Piano at the Guildhall School and taught extensively in conservatoires around the world. She performed and recorded regularly with The Music Collection chamber ensemble. Her Chandos and Naxos recordings include works by Clementi, Zipoli, JC Bach and Hummel.

Reviewing a solo Hummel recording for the Chandos Chaconne label in the February 2010 issue of *Gramophone*, Edward Greenfield wrote: 'Susan Alexander-Max, playing on a reproduction fortepiano of the period, is a most persuasive interpreter. It would be easy to make this music sound boring and conventional but she brings out the underlying liveliness, reflecting the impact that this music in the composer's hands made on audiences.'



The vinyl revival

Andrew Mellor explores the growth of the only physical format enjoying a consistent growth in sales. What is vinyl's appeal to collectors, and is it just a flash in the pan or here to stay?

Celebrating Stradella

David Vickers travels to the Italian town of Nepi for a festival dedicated to the Baroque composer Alessandro Stradella, which has given rise to an exciting recording venture, The Stradella Project

Gorgeous Goldbergs

In this month's Collection, Jed Distler trawls the recordings of the Goldberg Variations released since 1996 and picks his four top choices

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Leifs Cpte Songs. <i>Bjarnason/Magnússon.</i> ① BIS2170	

Mozart Pf Concs Nos 5 & 6. <i>Brautigam/Cologne Academy Orch/Willens.</i> ① ⑧ BIS2084	
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Kamasi Washington

The saxophonist, composer and bandleader on the links between jazz and classical music, and how he wrote his epic debut album

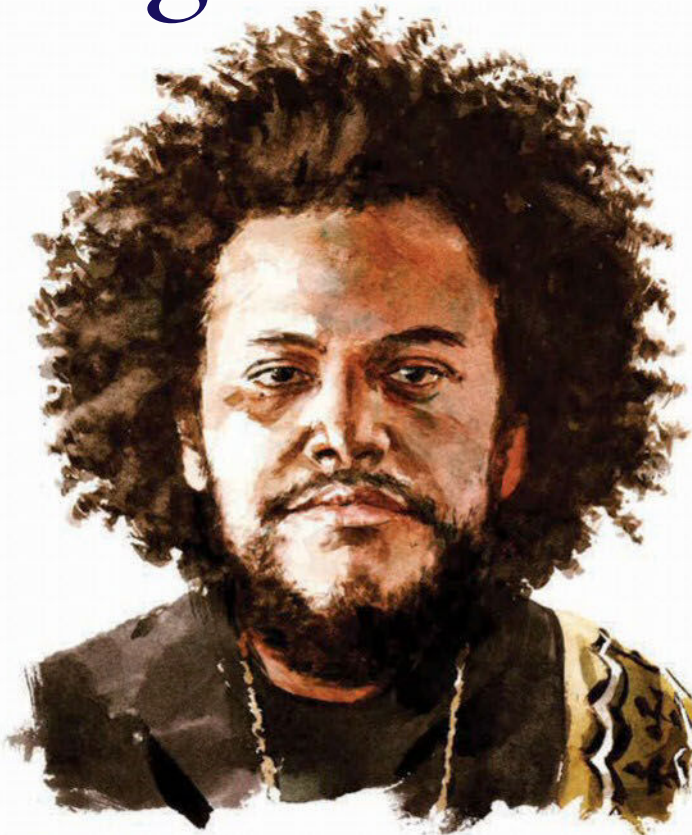
My dad is a musician so I started playing music from a young age – drums and piano. My interest in classical music didn't really come along until much later when I was in high school – I switched from a normal school to a music academy when I was in ninth grade – I was about 13.

I started playing in the orchestra and the wind ensemble and that's when I got turned on to people like Stravinsky, Ravel and Hindemith. It was pretty intense and serious – we were playing some difficult music. At the school there were so many musicians, so the jazz students weren't necessarily in those ensembles. But when I got into them I became friends with students who were doing classical music, and they turned me on to a lot of stuff. I had a friend who played French horn and who performed Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* on the piano for me. He gave me a CD of music that he liked, which really set me on my way. Another friend had a whole bunch of scores. It was a mixture of teachers and students who guided me into having an interest in classical music.

It was mainly music of the 20th century. Harmonically it was closer to jazz. It was cool – the complexity of the orchestrations, the melodies, the counterpoint, I could just immediately grasp the beauty of it. With Stravinsky it was the density – I like dense harmony. I was into avant-garde jazz, and Stravinsky's music had a similar feel to it. Ravel wrote melodies that were just really beautiful. I have recordings of the complete Ravel piano works and he definitely inspired me to take the time to really focus on melody whenever I'm writing. And Prokofiev had a lot of jazz in his approach.

Especially now, jazz and contemporary classical music are very, very much in the same realm, and I think that historically, as far back as the 1940s, there was a cross communication between musicians. Charlie Parker was really into Stravinsky, and I heard that Ravel and Prokofiev admired people like Duke Ellington. I think that any great musician has a degree of curiosity, in that you're going to explore outside your own backyard. Whether it's folk music, jazz or rock'n'roll, most musicians, even if they don't say it, pull from other things, they get inspired by other things. All music is connected in some way – like the way all people are connected, even if you don't really acknowledge it.

I've known all the musicians on my album [*The Epic*] since I was a kid – some since I was three years old. We've grown up playing music together. Every time something sparked an interest, I shared it with them. So I know that they have the reference to play in the way that I'm hearing it, but also to bring something to it that I didn't hear. When we play we're very improvisational – there's a song, there's a piece of music that I've written, but I'll leave it wide open for us to change it or alter it in any way that we see fit. While we're playing the



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This is one I listen to a lot – he's one of the composers I love who I never got to hear conduct his own music in concert.

music, sometimes someone will play something that will tip the whole band into a whole other song, and we'll just go! And that's the fun part of playing with that band, it's almost as if we're composing the music as we're playing it.

I wanted to maintain that for the record. But I wanted to involve a larger ensemble and I wanted to do more writing. So what I did was record the band first and then I wrote my [string and choral] arrangements around what we had done spontaneously. I would listen to the music over and over again and imagine what would be cool to have happen that would complement what the band had done. Over the course of a couple of months it started to really turn into something that was natural – I wanted it to feel like we were in there together. I was trying to listen to not just what the soloist was doing, but the accompaniment. It was a different way of writing – I've never really written in that way before. Choirs add a powerful element – with an instrument you can reach people, but the voice touches people in a different kind of way. Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* was my reference. I remember when I first heard that – those voices just grab you and really immerse you in the music. 6

The Epic, Washington's debut album, is out now on Brainfeeder

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